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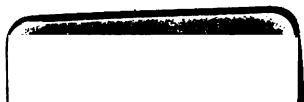
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CRYING FOR VENGEANCE.

A Novel.

BY

ELLEN C. CLAYTON,

AUTHOR OF "QUEENS OF SONG," "ENGLISH FEMALE ARTISTS,"
"PLAYING FOR LOVE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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CRYING FOR VENGEANCE.



CHAPTER I.

THE MARQUISE AND SIR THOMAS MAKE A SINGULAR DISCOVERY.

AN armistice was with difficulty brought about between Lady Creswell and her niece, but they were far from being on friendly terms. Lady Creswell tried every art, every persuasion to induce Ettie to like her, but without success.

A week passed. Sir Thomas Jervoise did not call at Westwood Park again. Perhaps he was waiting until the enemy's forces had been withdrawn.

At the end of the week Lucille went for one of her hurried visits to her grandmother. It was a fine, bright, frosty day ; and when she

rose to retrace her steps to the Park, Madame de Rochequillon proposed to walk part of the way home with her.

They had walked some little distance from the farm, when they were suddenly startled by a terrific barking, and immediately after, a large, savage-looking dog—an Alpine mastiff—broke through the leafless hedge on one side the road, and flew towards them, barking and snarling frightfully.

The marquise, although brave in general, had a mortal terror of dogs. Even of small dogs she had a certain mistrust; and seeing this big brute, with glaring eyes, and red tongue, and horrid teeth, dancing round her in a demoniac half circle, which he narrowed each second, terrified her almost into hysterics. Lucille, although also alarmed, had more courage.

“Down, sir!” she cried, trying to subdue him by sheer bravado.

She raised her voice very loud, being even more alarmed for her grandmother than for herself, though she had always heard that dogs take advantage of any one in whom they detect signs of fear. The instant she screamed

out, the sound of a horse's hoofs answered her, and the next moment Sir Thomas Jervoise rode up. He saw the state of affairs in an instant.

"Down, Roy, down, down!" he cried.
"Down, you devil!"

He sprang from his horse, and with his whip began lashing Roy until the creature howled for mercy, and then he flung him to a distance.

"I hope—I hope——" he just articulated, advancing to Lucille, and looking at her with eyes full of alarm. "He has frightened you. He did not touch you? If he has touched you, I will kill him."

"No, no; thanks. I was a little frightened. I am sorry you beat him so severely. My grandmother——"

Madame de Rochequillon, who had begun to recover, and who had sunk on the dry, hard bank, underneath the hedge, now rose, and looked at their deliverer.

"My grandmother, Sir Thomas Jervoise. This is Sir Thomas Jervoise, grandmamma."

"I have had the pleasure of meeting this lady before," said Sir Thomas, raising his hat.

"I hope, madam, you have not been seriously alarmed? I shall never forgive that brute if he has caused you more than a moment's uneasiness."

"Thank you, sir. I am very timid when I meet with dogs."

"Roy is generally so quiet. I cannot conceive what possessed him to act in this outrageous manner. I have a great mind to thrash him again."

"Oh no; do not be so cruel. Poor creature, he has been punished enough. Dear grandma, you must turn back."

Madame de Rochequillon was really shaking with her recent terror, and agreed to turn back immediately.

"Will you permit me to offer my protection as far as your home, madam?" said Sir Thomas, earnestly—so earnestly that, when he repeated his offer, or rather his request, Madame de Rochequillon made so faint a refusal that he took it for permission, and walked on beside the ladies, leading his horse. Roy crept after them at a respectful distance, and almost out of sight.

Sir Thomas made himself so agreeable by

the way, that Madame de Rochequillon was perfectly charmed with him.

When he was leaving her, just at the gate of the farmyard, the marquise thanked him gracefully for his consideration.

“Do not speak of it, madam. I regret so deeply that you should have suffered alarm from the antics of that brute of mine.”

He raised his hat, and mounting his horse, rode off, leaving Madame de Rochequillon eloquent in his praises.

“What perfect manners—what grace and elegance! I never saw so handsome a man. What magnificent eyes, and what soft melody there is in his voice, and what a fund of wit and anecdote! With what exquisite correctness and fluency he speaks our own dear language!”

Lucille remained utterly silent during her grandmother’s rhapsody, then, with a sudden impulse, she told her of what Lady Creswell had revealed concerning part of the baronet’s past life. She also related his defence, as advanced by himself.

“Bah! Young men will be young men. I dare say he played high, and perhaps got into.

some dilemma. She is doubtless actuated by some feeling of animosity against him, which incites her to traduce him. Elderly beauties are often piqued by the neglect of young men; and as their minds are narrow, their bitterness transcends the proportions of the fancied offences. We cannot expect young men to be as immaculate in their lives as nuns of the order of St. Ursula. They must sow their wild oats."

Lucille did not attempt to enter into a discussion with her, but, leaving her at the gate, went off at a smart pace in the direction of Westwood Park.

The next morning Sir Thomas called at Pytchley Farm, to ascertain if the Marquise de Rochequillon had felt any serious effects from the alarm which she had unhappily sustained.

No. The marquise assured him that it had been nothing but a passing fright. They entered into conversation, and talked for a long time, about Paris, about the neighbourhood, about anything and everything. When two people are not only willing, but anxious to form an acquaintance, it is wonderful how

many subjects they find to exchange ideas upon, and underlying each trivial remark, is a deeper meaning, to sound the depths of mutual likings and dislikings, prejudices for and against.

Not only that day, but on several successive occasions did Sir Thomas Jervoise call upon Madame de Rochequillon, and after a time they became remarkably friendly.

By degrees the baronet learnt a good deal of madame's history. She even imparted to him the fact that some day her grandchild *might* be a baroness.

Sir Thomas made no particular commentary on this last startling piece of intelligence ; but when he went home he took down a copy of "Debrett's Peerage," to find out who was the present heir presumptive to Lord Deveril.

He laid down the book with amazement. It had never occurred to him to inquire who or what Charles Pleydill might be, often as he had met him. But now he recollected that one day he had heard him speak of the illness of his uncle, Lord Deveril.

He lay back in his chair for a long time in his library, with the open book before him, his dark luminous eyes half closed.

"If I had only known," he muttered. "Well, if I *had* known, what difference would that have made? Did Lucille know? Did he know who Lucille was?"

The next time he saw the marquise he adroitly led her to speak on her favourite topic, and asked her, with a well-acted air of semi-indifferent interest, the name of the person who stood between Miss Charteris and the succession to the title.

She told him readily enough.

"May I ask—have you ever seen this person?"

"Never."

"I think, mademoiselle, your granddaughter is acquainted with him."

Madame de Rochequillon looked at him with unfeigned surprise.

"Indeed, sir, you must be mistaken. If Lucille knew him, she would have mentioned it to me. Why should you think she is acquainted with Mr.——"

As she was about to utter the name, its identity with that of one of the visitors at the Park during the first weeks of Lucille's sojourn there struck her. She paused.

“Charles Pierrepont Pleydill is by no means a common name—not a name likely to be owned by many people. It is the name of Lord Deveril’s heir presumptive, as you informed me the other day. This heir was born in 1849, as I happened to see in looking over ‘Debrett’s Peerage,’ a day or two since,” he added with a little confusion, which he threw off in a second. “Consequently he would be six and twenty. I am speaking merely for the sake of argument,” he added, interrupting himself.

“Go on, sir.”

He explained his reasons at some length for presuming that Charles Pierrepont Pleydill of Stourton must be identical with the Charles Pierrepont Pleydill whom he had met at Westwood Park, and with a little ingenuity of argument contrived to impress madame with his conviction.

Sir Thomas would have liked to speak with Lucille on the subject, and to endeavour to discover if she knew that Charles Pleydill was the man who stood between her and prospective rank and wealth.

Curiously, the baronet had never felt the

slightest jealousy of Charley, nor conjectured that there could be any reason to regard him as a possible rival. He wished now that he had cultivated his acquaintance a little more; though for what purpose, he did not pause to consider.

Sir Thomas was not in the habit of allowing himself to be surprised, but Madame de Rochequillon's confidence had really astonished him. He felt a lively desire to know whether the barony was a rich or a poor one.

"It is no business of mine," he muttered, leaning his elbows on the table, and his chin on his folded hands; "but I should absolutely like to know. How could I find out? One never can know too much—knowledge is power. It is no affair of mine," he repeated, "I have nothing to do with it; but still I really should be glad to know. How—how can I find out?"

He meditated for a long time, never shifting his attitude, but resting his chin on his hands, and staring at the armorial bearings painted on the window opposite to which he sat.

"I have it. I shall write a line to Carttar, and he'll find out for me. He will go to the

Income Tax and Property Office, and fish it out there somehow. He must find out, or I'll know why."

He pulled over his desk, and opening it, began to write a letter. When it was written, he directed it to "Jaspar Carttar, Esq., Carey Street, Lincoln's Inn, London, W.C."

This Jaspar Cartter was a pettifogging attorney who, from time to time, had been very useful to Sir Thomas.

A week passed, and Sir Thomas received a reply from Jaspar Carttar.

He read it, and crushed it up in his hand, prior to setting it alight in a taper which he kindled.

"Thirty-five thousand a year. I have fifteen thousand. If my wife had thirty-five thousand, that would make fifty thousand a year. Little Ettie has thirty thousand pounds altogether. What a prize! Bah! where's the use of dreaming? Perhaps one might like to be Emperor of all the Russias—I shouldn't, for the position is far from being to my taste; but even if it were my pet ambition, how far should I advance myself by dreaming about it? Well, after all is said

and done, Tom Dallas, Esquire, American gentleman, what the devil do you want with trying to grasp at more than you have already? Isn't fifteen thousand a year quite sufficient for your simple needs? Ah, but, my dear fellow, you see, at any moment the pretty bubble may collapse, and you may have to make a bolt of it; whereas if you had a wife with plenty of money, you would always know where to look whenever the goddess Fortune fell into a bad humour. Don't you see that, my worthy friend? Thirty-five thousand a year, and to be a baroness, and only the life of an old man, who, Carttar says, is dying, and the life of a young man, whom the accident of a moment might topple over into the other and better world—only these two lives between. What does the girl herself think of her possible destiny? Charles P. Pleydill is unmarried, so there are no children to succeed him in case anything happens to him. Bah! bah! why do I think about it? Why do I dream? I used to laugh at the man in the story-book, who dreamt until he kicked over his basket of bottles and glasses whereby he was to found his fortune, and now I am worse.

than he was, because I have not even a basket wherewith to form a superstructure for my dreams. Confound that old cat at Westwood Park! I could wring her neck with pleasure. I wonder how long she is going to inflict her company on the unlucky family there? I have a prejudice against aunts in general, and I don't find that this individual specimen softens my rancour against the race. My little Ettie must be miserable, and Lucille—I wonder does she care for my coming and going? If I had been a great villain, one of those fine fellows who don't scruple at anything, or even a clever fellow, with ideas in my head, like my old friend Vayning, I should take good care that my pretty Lucille should soon be able to place a coronet on her broad beautiful forehead. But I am not one of your fine, clever villains, who cork their eyebrows and talk big. I simply drift here and there, and have only sufficient talent to catch at this or that piece of luck as it floats by me. If these two people died to-morrow, and I made Lucille an offer, would she accept it, I wonder? I should like to know what she thinks of the vague charges brought against

me by that old catamaran the other day? She didn't believe them, I feel pretty sure of that. But I wonder what she would think of a neat little map of my past life? "

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER TURN OF FORTUNE'S WHEEL.

LADY CRESWELL at last grew tired of watching and waiting, and prepared to withdraw from the scene of operations. Finding that Sir Thomas came very rarely to the house, and that when he did call he stayed a very short time, and during his brief visit spoke only of the leading public topics of the day, she began to imagine that Mrs. Alvanley must have been mistaken in thinking that he had any idea of paying his addresses to Ettie.

She was exceedingly urgent in almost beseeching Ettie to go with her, and implored the squire to exert his influence over the girl to persuade or coerce her into going. The squire obstinately refused to interfere, and said he should let his daughter do just as she pleased.

Ettie was wretched. She attributed the changes in Sir Thomas's manner, and his infrequent, hasty visits, to indignation at being insulted by her aunt.

Not knowing that Sir Thomas's irresolution tormented him more and more every day, she sought, by various innocent little devices, to gain his confidence. With the hope of meeting him, she rode out every morning; but she never met him even once. During these painful weeks she shed many bitter tears in the solitude of her own room.

"I wish my aunt would go away. He is angry, and I suffer for my aunt's wicked injustice," she said to herself and to Lucille.

She replied to her aunt's reiterated invitations with a stern refusal.

"I won't go with you. I won't leave my home, and all I care for, to go and marry your rich marquises," she said, answering Lady Creswell's seductive offers. "I don't care about jewels, and houses, and fine clothes, nor the park, nor the opera either. Let me alone. Why should I care about them—what good would they do me? I don't want to be a fine lady. I'm not fit to be a fine lady."

"I shall not take any more trouble in trying to persuade you," cried Lady Creswell, irefully. "One would think it was for my own benefit, and not for yours, that I was coaxing you. I never knew such an obstinate, pig-headed little mule."

"Where's the good of bothering me?" demanded Ettie.

"Whatever your governess may teach you," said Lady Creswell, with much severity, "it does not appear that she instructs you in the rule of good manners."

"Well, I didn't mean to be rude," apologetically explained Ettie. "But I don't like being tormented."

"Tormented! What an extraordinary phrase! You shall no longer be tormented by me, Miss Alvanley. I hope the time may never come when you may bitterly repent not having accepted my offer. If, at any time, you should change your mind, write to me, or come. I shall always be pleased to receive you, and do everything I can to put you forward."

This offer she repeated as her foot was on the step of the carriage, as she was quitting the house to take the train for London.

"I am sure you are very kind, and Ettie is an ungrateful, silly little thing," said Mrs. Alvanley.

"Let her alone," interrupted the squire, putting his arm round Ettie, as if to protect her. "Why should she go? She is very happy here—are you not, my dear?"

"Yes, papa."

"Then why should she go away? I haven't so many children that I can afford to part with her."

Ettie, who had had an uneasy dread lest they should compel her to go with her aunt, pressed her father's arm with all her force, by way of silent thanks for his championship.

She was greatly delighted when the carriage in which her aunt was seated disappeared from sight, and skipped over the house in her glee.

A week passed, and Sir Thomas did not come, as Ettie had hoped he would. Every day she said to herself, "He does not know she has gone," as an excuse for his absence.

The first time she saw him after her aunt's departure was at church, coming out. He stopped to exchange a few courteous words

with the Alvanleys, and then he learned that Lady Creswell had left them.

Another week passed, and he did not come.

Ettie had not the consolation of assuring herself during these seven weary days that he stayed away because he did not like her aunt's society. She was driven to seek comfort at the hands of her governess.

"Why does he stay away?" she said, piteously.

Lucille could not tell. She shook her head, but could not offer a solution to the mystery.

She, too, had been looking for him, and wondering why he stayed away.

Mrs. Alvanley arrived at the conclusion that she had been mistaken in her supposition that Sir Thomas Jervoise had had any idea of Ettie, and then dismissed the subject from her mind. She thought it a thousand pities that Ettie had been so obstinate in rejecting the kind offers of Lady Creswell, and sighed when she reflected that she might herself have been so easily relieved of what she felt to be a responsibility—the charge of the future welfare of her step-daughter.

Sir Thomas's irresolution had not yet cleared off.

He determined to wait a little longer. He could not sacrifice himself without a struggle.

The chance that Lucille might one day be a peeress in her own right, with a splendid yearly income, had made a great difference in his estimate of the beautiful French girl; but chances were more against him than in his favour.

"I shall go abroad for a month or so, and wait until I see my way more clearly. I don't expect anything to turn up, but I must consider the matter a little more fully before I make up my mind," he reflected.

He took an opportunity when he knew Ettie would, in all probability, be out riding, to call at the Park, and announce to Mrs. Alvanley that he was obliged to go to Paris for a short time, on urgent business. He expressed his regret that he had not the good fortune to be able to pay his respects in person to Miss Alvanley, and left the most profusely complimentary messages, which he begged Mrs. Alvanley to kindly offer her.

He did not see Lucille, as she was in her own room, during his brief visit, unconscious of his vicinity.

The following day he quitted Deignmouth, on his way to Paris.

As he was going into the station, the very first person on whom his eyes lighted was the man whose appearance had so startled him the last time he was leaving Deignmouth—Mr. Wynstyn.

He pulled his hat down as far as he could, and put his handkerchief up to his face, and turning on his heel, rapidly quitted the station, striking off into the open country.

By doing so, he missed the train, but he also avoided any possibility of meeting the man whom he evidently wished to shun.

It was a fine day, and as there was a larger station, belonging to a different line, whence he could travel to London, about seven miles from the one which he had just left, his only inconvenience was the loss of a few hours.

The walk, to an active man, was exhilarating. He did not care particularly for time, and had no luggage, having sent on his portmanteau before him. He had walked to the station, as his custom was, not wishing to give any one an opportunity for knowing whither he was going.

“The devil!” he ejaculated, when he had walked some distance. “He is, then, living here it seems. He must be staying at—the deuce! I shall take jolly good care that I don’t show my precious person in this region for some little time to come. I wish he could have stayed at Barbadoes. I suppose the old boy has made his fortune, and come over to enjoy himself. Queer ideas of enjoyment he must have. What a slow old coach. I should like to know if he really is staying there, or does he merely run down from London just to show himself? To think that I have been going to and fro, paying visits to my soft-hearted marquise, at the place. I feel pretty much as a mouse might, if it found that it had been playing hide-and seek in and out of pussy’s bed-room. Poor old boy! He looks well. How astonished he would be! I don’t think there is a possibility that he could recognize me, but it’s best to be on the safe side. I think my heart is going pit-a-pat yet. Now, if I happened to be given to nerves, or anything of that sort, ’twould have been all over with me.”

When he had walked about a mile and a half he began to resume his composure.

"I wonder what my little Ettie thought of my abrupt departure?" he meditated, as he strode along, jauntily swinging his cane.

He looked impertinently handsome as he marched with a steady pace on the lonely country road, under the pale golden sunshine. He was neither an Apollo nor an Ajax, but he was strong, muscular, and a model of almost perfect manly beauty. Dress had very little to do with the effect of his appearance, for although his fine figure was set off to the utmost advantage by a faultless toilet; although the respectful salutations offered by straggling country-folks whom he passed, were extorted by his elegant attire as much as by his lordly demeanour, yet had he been disguised in the flannel jacket and corduroys of a navvy, he would still have looked handsome, princely.

His hands and feet alone betrayed to the nice observer that he was not the true patrician. They were well formed, but a critic would have declared them to be too large. The hands were delicately white, with carefully trimmed pinky nails, and would have afforded a specimen to the student of charac-

ter. The fingers were long, and well shaped; but had even a master painter sketched these hands, critics would have pronounced them "out of drawing." Difficult of portrayal by an artist, it would have been next to impossible for the most skilful of word-painters to delineate these hands. They expressed the most contradictory qualities—softness, cruelty, deceitfulness, candour, firmness, weakness. It may seem strange, but it is true. The firm qualities were evinced in the thumb and first two fingers; the weak characteristics were betrayed in the remaining fingers, and in the colour and texture.

"Ah me," he thought, "I wonder if Miss Alvanley will be tremendously sorry when she knows I have gone again. I am afraid my Lucille regards me as a very vacillating, if not a rather weak-minded young man. It cannot be helped. If she got hold of her barony and her thirty-five thousand per annum, I should not hesitate a moment in throwing myself at her feet. If I have played fast and loose—Where's the use of thinking about it? Perhaps I may marry Ettie after all, unless I meet with somebody else who offers higher.

inducements. The truth of the matter is, I wish I had never come near this place."

He found, on arriving at Amber Gate Station, that he had just missed the London train by half an hour. There would not be another train for London, the ticket-porter said, for two hours. Sir Thomas Jervoise purchased his ticket, however, and walked off, to pass the time as best as he could.

"My most grateful benison be on you, ancient party in the brown coat and the spatterdashes. Why couldn't you have stayed where you were? You were comfortable enough. What the deuce am I to do to kill time? I am tired by my seven-mile walk, and as to amusing myself by strolling through a country town—I, who am weary almost of Paris—such an extraordinary proceeding is not to be thought of for an instant."

There was no help for it, however. The sunshine had almost faded away being replaced by the grave cloudiness of an early spring day, and every place looked equally dull and uninviting.

The unlucky traveller could think of nothing better to do than to repair to the

inn near the station, and there have some luncheon. After which, he lay down in the coffee-room, requesting to be awakened within half an hour of the starting of the train.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEAUTIFUL GABRIELLA.

LORD DEVERIL was breakfasting in the pleasant sitting-room off his bed-chamber, in the villa which he had taken at Bagaria, near Palermo. The windows overlooked the lovely bay, and afforded a view of the Conca d'Oro—the Marina—the most charming ride, walk, or drive in Europe; the giant Mount Pellegrino, and the little fort Castelli di Solanto, and the distant cone of Etna.

Breakfast, like most of the invalid's other meals, was almost a matter of form with Lord Deveril. The disorder from which he suffered had been temporarily checked by his removal to a soft climate, but his days were numbered.

Charley was with him. It was irksome to that young man, this perpetual and compul-

sory attendance on his dying relative; but from the nature of the illness of Lord Deveril, it was impossible that he could be left to the mercy of hirelings, while one of his blood existed. From his boyhood, the poor baron had been sober and temperate, and had led a quiet country life, but some months before this he had been broken up by rheumatic fever, and when he had struggled through it, inflammation of the heart had supervened.

Lord Deveril sipped his chocolate, and nibbled a morsel of dry toast, while Charley made a more substantial meal. Lord Deveril was a large, strong-looking, formerly kind of man; broad-shouldered, with a big hand and strong limbs, and had been rubicund and jovial.

To the best of his belief, Lord Deveril did not possess a relative in the world besides Charley. It so happened that Charley had never mentioned to his cousin his discovery of the daughter of George Charteris. It had long been a sore anxiety to Lord Deveril that on this one being depended the future of the old house of which he was so proud, and the extinction of which he dreaded. For some time, since he knew that it was next to an im-

possibility that he could recover, Lord Deveril had reflected on the comparative uncertainty of the succession. By the accident of a moment, if anything happened to Charley, the family would be extinct. He wished now that he had urged Charley to marry, forgetting to take into account that circumstances were now very different from what they had been, even a year back, or before he had suffered his fatal illness.

“He might have had half a dozen children by this time,” thought the old nobleman. “They might have been all boys, too. What a lucky thing that would have been. I almost wish I had married myself, only I might have shut out poor Charley from his chance, so I’m glad I didn’t.”

This morning he had been meditating profoundly on the subject, even while Charley read interesting fragments of news from the *Times* for his benefit. Charley was wading through a lengthy report of a strike in the mining districts—for his cousin took a peculiar interest in the subject of mines—when Lord Deveril interrupted him.

“Charley, I want to talk to you.”

"Do you, Edward? I hope it isn't anything very serious?" said Charley, laying down his paper with a smile.

"Yes, I am going to talk very seriously to you, Charley. I do wish you could have married before this."

"Married!" echoed Charley, in unfeigned surprise.

"Why, yes, married. I wish you had a wife and a dozen children."

"Thank you. Why so?"

Lord Deveril hesitatingly confessed his doubts and misgivings and uneasy feelings about the succession. "Just think; you are single, and may never marry."

Charley smiled, compressing his lips, and took up his *Times* again.

"No, put down that paper. You know you may never marry, and then, if you die an old bachelor, like myself, what becomes of the family and the name? It makes me miserable to think of it."

"It is my misfortune, not my fault, that I have not married," said Charley in a low tone.

"How?"

"You do not consider. How could I

marry, when I am as poor as Job? There is only this difference between my case and that of the venerable patriarch, that at one time he had a fine property, and I have never had a farthing more than I found absolutely necessary for my daily wants."

"Ah, true. But I should die happy, I think, if I could see you married."

"Perhaps, if I could gratify you, as far as that went, you might not like my wife," said Charley.

"I should be sure to like anybody you liked, Charley. You will soon be rich. I shall soon be out of your way—well, I won't say that. I know you don't like it, my boy. Do you think there is any likelihood of your marrying soon?"

"How does it happen that your thoughts run so pertinaciously on the subject this morning?"

"I have been thinking about it for a long time. I hardly ever think about anything else, only I didn't like to talk about it. Is there any girl whom you would think of marrying, eh, Charley?" He looked steadfastly at him, with open anxiety.

Charley balanced a tea-spoon on the edge of the tray, laid it down, fidgeted with a knife, threw that down, then took up his paper.

"Where's the good of talking about these things?" he said, at last.

"Come, you haven't answered me."

"It is queer that you should take it into you head to talk about this, of all imaginable things."

"Charley, I hope and trust you may live many, many years yet, but if you never marry, the family will die out, and it has now lasted since the Conquest. Don't you see, I feel it so hard that the existence of the family should be centred in one heir, whom the accident of a moment—but we won't speak of that. Excepting myself, and I shall soon be gone, you are the only remaining representative of the family."

"No, there is another." With a sudden impulse, Charley told him of Lucille Charteris. Lord Deveril listened with interest and surprise.

"Why did you never tell me of this young girl before? We ought not to have left her to earn her own bread like a——"

“I don’t know why I never mentioned her to you, Edward. When I first met her, however, I did not think of writing to you, as we were not in the habit of corresponding; and when I went to you in London, you were too ill to be able to speak about anything, and afterwards—— I scarcely know how I happened not to mention her.”

“What is she like?”

Charlie described Miss Charteris in glowing terms. As he went on talking about her he yielded to an unaccountable feeling, and confessed to his cousin the secret of his admiration for Lucille. Lord Deveril asked him if Miss Charteris knew of this.

“She does not. I was so situated that I could not ask her to marry me, and so I preferred not to entangle her in any way.”

“Queer. I hope, Charley, she likes you. I hope you will marry her. She seems to be a good girl. It would have been so pleasant if she had been with us—not for her, though. It isn’t pleasant dancing attendance on a sick man. Charley, I wish you could—I wish I knew you and she were engaged——”

"Don't talk about it, my dear Edward. I don't like it."

Lord Deveril was very anxious to suggest that Charley should write then and there to Miss Charteris, making her a formal offer. But he was afraid to advance the proposition, and waited for another, perhaps more favourable opportunity.

After a conversation of this kind, Charley could not return with tranquility to the miners and their grievances, so he got up and went away for his usual morning's "constitutional."

"What an extraordinary whim to take up," he remarked to himself, as he stopped for a minute at the foot of the steps of the house to light his cigar under the shade of a large lemon-tree. "What can have led him to think of my marrying, of all things in the world!"

But the conversation of the morning drew his thoughts back to Lucille. He thought it would have been pleasant if he could have obtained the privilege of writing to her, and of receiving letters from her, during this, his exile—for such he now considered it—from England.

In the evening Charley generally went into Palermo ; for Lord Deveril went to bed early, and made it a special point that Charley was not to be immured, particularly as the nights were so beautiful this spring weather, that with sunset a new life seemed to begin.

On the evening of the day when Lord Deveril broached the subject of his cousin's marriage, Charley went into Palermo. It was a splendid night. The sea breeze was blowing in freshly. The Marina was crowded with carriages, and the music from the regimental bands floated on the soft air.

Charley knew scarcely any one in Palermo, and was on intimate terms with none. He was therefore surprised when, as he was passing the Victoria Hotel, on the Upper Marina, he heard some one call, familiarly—

“Charley !”

Charley turned, and faced a young man, attired in a military undress, who advanced with an eager salutation.

“Sackville Vayning !”

“The same. I am so glad to see you, my dear fellow. How does it happen that you are here ?”

"I am really glad to meet you," said Charley, shaking hands warmly with him.

Sackville Vayning had been an old school-fellow of Charley's in his Eton days. They had met again at Oxford, and the friendship inaugurated at school ripened into a stronger and more enduring sentiment. Sackville was the son of a tradesman, a wealthy jeweller, and Charley was heir presumptive to an English peerage ; but Sackville was pardoned his birth in consideration of his own personal merits, and he kept out of the circles where he might have been snubbed. The man would have been daring, however, who would have attempted the experiment of trying to snub Sackville Vayning.

Sackville was about six and twenty. He had a thoroughly Saxon, honest look, nothing insipid, nothing commonplace in his aspect, though any one in describing him might have unintentionally given the impression that he was either or both. His head was not a "clever" one, but it was like one of those antique busts which are perfect in outline. The features were cut out, not sharply, but with the exquisite delicacy of a cameo. There

was something knightly in his bearing and physique—the knightliness of a Sir Lancelot or a Galahad, not of a ruthless Sir Brian de Bois Guilbert or Sir Edyon. One could fancy that the crown of King Arthur would have sat well on his open, broad brow, or that he would have worn the white robe and red cross of a Knight Templar with grace.

In answer to Sackville's questions, Charley explained how it came to pass that he was sojourning at Palermo.

"As for me, I came from over the way—from Malta, where my regiment is stationed," said Sackville. "Just at present I am obliged to come hither pretty often, as my sisters and two or three cousins have taken a fancy to explore some of the regions in this direction, and are staying with a cousin, Gabriella Pasquali."

They walked a little way together, talking about old times and new. Sackville asked Charley if he knew many people in Palermo.

"No," Charley answered. "I don't care to have my time occupied by acquaintances while I am on my present unhappy mission. I have therefore made no effort to mix in any sort of society."

"You must find the time pass in a most intolerably stupid manner. You must allow me the pleasure of introducing you to my sisters—and to Gabriella," Sackville added, hesitating for a moment. "They are all sure to be assembled at Gabriella's house this evening. It is a pity we are neither of us dressed. Could you come to-morrow evening?"

"I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of seeing your sisters," said Charley. "Yes, I shall be greatly pleased to accompany you to-morrow evening, any time you please. Dine with me to-morrow evening, and then you will see my cousin, Lord Deveril. I know he will be delighted to see you."

They had walked up and down the Marine Promenade several times while talking. Sackville sat down on the edge of the dwarf wall, and idly looked about—from the amphitheatre of lights round the bay, to the gentle rippling waters lying under the silvery rays of the moon. The song of the homeward-bound fishermen seemed borne on the fresh breeze, blowing in from the sea; and the influence of the calm, soft night, and the gay, yet

tempered current of life all round was strangely subduing while it exhilarated.

The young men ceased talking for five or ten minutes.

"I think," said Sackville, as he flung the stump end of the cigar he had been smoking into the water, lighting another—"I think you will like my sisters, and my cousins. Pasquali is a crotchety fellow on some points, but very gentlemanly and good-humoured, Gabriella—Madame Pasquali—you are certain to admire her. Everybody does."

Soon after, they separated, Sackville having agreed to dine with Charley the following evening, and go from his cousin's house to that of Madame Pasquali.

Lord Deveril had known Sackville Vayning when a youth, as a friend of Charley's, and he had not forgotten him, so their meeting was a warm and cordial one. Sackville Vayning was ordinarily neither lively nor witty; in general society he was silent and reserved, but when with people whom he liked, he was most agreeable and entertaining, and could maintain his full share of an easy interchange of thought. He could not shower

bon-mots and sparkling nothings about him ; he was rarely sarcastic, never cynical or bitter, but what he said was well worth attention. He always knew clearly what he wanted to say, and uttered his thoughts with precision, in well-chosen language.

After dinner, the two young men left the house, driving into the city in the carriage in which Sackville had come.

"I must warn you, before you meet Gabriella," Major Vayning said, "that, if you have not already vowed allegiance to some fair lady, you must take care of yourself, for she will try to cast her silken net over you."

Charley laughed that kind of laugh which may signify anything, which chiefly indicates a belief that the proposition advanced is mere matter-of-course nonsense. Sackville Vayning did not continue speaking for a few minutes.

"I tell you, because—because I have known her to victimize two or three unfortunate fellows. I once very nearly singed my wings fluttering about her," he added, in a lower tone, looking away from Charley ; "but luckily I saw my danger in time, and escaped."

"I thought you told me she was married?" said Charley, innocently.

"Married! Yes—she is. And her husband is as jealous as Othello or Sir Geraint, or the Lord of Savern. Take care of yourself, that's all. Forewarned is fore-armed. Her desire for admiration and homage is insatiable. She is twenty-two, and one of the most artful and insidious flirts in Europe." He said this in an indescribable tone. "I'd have given—anything—once—to be able to marry her, for she is a very siren—and perfectly bewitching. That was in the old days, before I knew her as she is. I speak of her to you—speak of her as I would speak to no other living being, because I don't want you to be victimized. I should never forgive myself if——"

He broke off abruptly, and was silent after this, until they reached the Via de Toledo—the first of the three streets of Palermo.

They stopped at a house situated about the middle of the street. This house, like all others on either side of the street, was tall and stately, with projecting balconies; like all the other houses, too, it had striped blinds, and the windows were full of flowers.

Charley followed his friend up to the drawing-room. When they entered, they found half a dozen people, all evidently English.

In the middle of the room, as if in the centre of a magic circle, a young woman stood alone. This was Madame Pasquali, Sackville Vayning's cousin Gabriella.

Sackville led his friend up to this lady, and introduced him. Charley, in crossing the room, had sufficient time to make a rapid survey of her, for she was so conspicuous from her position and her peculiar aspect, that any one coming into the room must of necessity have observed her before looking at the others assembled.

She was about two or three and twenty—tall, lithe, singularly graceful, with a slender, exquisitely rounded figure. Her face was marvellously—fascinatingly pretty, despite its undoubted defects. It was delicate, with a peach-like bloom, which was not, it must be confessed, quite devoid of a *soupeçon* of powder; the forehead was low; the eyes were of the clearest grey, wherein was a noticeable tinge of green, which seemed reflected from the sea, as the blue sky seems

reflected in the eyes of some blondes; the nose was a thought too short, but straight, and well-shaped; the lips were thin, blood-red in colour, excepting when, as was often the case, she compressed them, when the red disappeared, and nothing beyond a narrow line was observable; the chin was pointed. Her hair was arranged in the most severely classic style; it was without a ripple or a wave, and banded simply across her brow. Looking at her, without taking in the details of her appearance, you saw a tall, graceful young woman, with a singularly pretty face; hair as smooth and glossy as ebony or jet; grey eyes, which shifted beneath your glance; blood-red lips, always moving and working; a pointed chin, and hands small as those of a child. She was attired with perfect simplicity. A dress of the most delicate silk—in colour the hue of fine summer dust,—a necklace of diamonds, diamond ear-rings, and diamond bracelets: from these elements she had composed a toilet of rare and classic beauty,

Madame Pasquali received her cousin's friend with cordiality. She spoke with him

for a few minutes, and then introduced him to the company—three Miss Vaynings, two Miss Landales, two or three English ladies, and four or five English gentlemen.

Miss Vayning, and her sisters Clara and Laura, were not favourable specimens of Anglican beauty. Miss Vayning was tall, large, and masculine, with dark red hair and a mottled complexion. Clara was large and fat, good-natured looking ; but, as far as so supine a person could be vulgar. Laura was of medium height, thin to boniness, stiff and cold, and had sharp elbows and a skinny neck, which she most injudiciously displayed as profusely as decency would permit. There was a fourth Miss Vayning, who had not come with her sisters. Lucy and Emma Landale were insipid beauties—pale and slim-waisted.

The embarrassing ceremony of introduction over, Madame Pasquali found a seat for Charley near his friend, where he would neither be under the fire of the eyes of those sitting around, nor thrown into the shadow of obscurity.

“We are going to organize some *tableaux vivants*,” she said, turning to Sackville. “We

want some good effective scenes. Will you help us ? ”

“ In what way ? ” asked Sackville.

“ Either by suggesting good scenes, or by taking a part. Perhaps you will be kind enough to do both ? ”

“ If I can be of use in any way, you have only to command me,” said Sackville, bowing. “ But you must not tax me beyond my abilities.”

“ The difficulty is to arrange the scenes. Two or three have been suggested, but objections have been advanced against all those already named.”

“ Why, Sackville,” said William Landale, the brother of the Miss Landales, a tall young man of twenty-five, who had a hard, beardless face, and a dry, cynical look, “ it would be easy enough to manage, but these fellows who are to play all wear whiskers, or moustaches, or both, and won’t shave. It’s absurd, you know. I don’t see how it’s to be done.”

“ Is that the chief difficulty ? ” asked Sackville.

“ No, no,” said Madame Pasquali, in a tone which indicated that she did not desire any

cause of annoyance to be roused. "We can select our scenes from those periods of history, or from those tales and romances in which——"

"In which every variety of beard and whiskers are admissible?" said William Landale, as his cousin paused. "Suppose we have Bluebeard, for example; only these fellows would be selfish enough to walk in with black, or brown, or red, or yellow, or any colour save and except blue beards. You know it's nonsense. It's ridiculous—it's preposterous."

"As you have asked me to do so, I will suggest a scene," said Sackville. "Gabriella would look charming as Mary of Scots; suppose you have the scene where Lord Ruthven compels her to sign her abdication."

"Where he seizes her by the wrist and goes on in a generally unpleasant manner, you mean?" said Harold Eskell, a young fellow who spoke with a lisp.

"Gabriella looks too young for the Queen of Scots at that epoch," objected Miss Vayning.

"You cannot be hypercritical," said her

brother. "Mary of Scots was always young and beautiful."

"Who would be Ruthven?"

Sackville nodded his head in the direction of a dark-bearded gentleman, who, by assuming as far as his ordinarily mild aspect would allow, the fierce expression of the Scotch laird, might pass.

"But the group would be such a crowded one," William Landale objected.

Gabriella received the proposition with quiet approbation, and sent young Eskell, who was one of her lieges, to the library, for the "Abbot," in order that they might read up for the scene, and ascertain how far it was practicable.

"Well, as you have made a success of your first essay, will you please make another suggestion?" said William Landale, addressing Sackville Vayning.

"You might have some admirable scenes from 'Ivanhoe,'" said Sackville.

"We have no Rebecca, and scenes from 'Ivanhoe' are nothing without Rebecca. And no Rowena either, for Gabriella's hair is black," again objected Miss Vayning.

"Well,"—Sackville meditated for a few minutes—"the garden scene in 'Faust.' Gabriella might be Marguerite, for although Marguerite ought to have golden hair, yet one must make some concessions. Marie Stuart had fair tresses, if my memory serves me right."

"I must not monopolize all the characters," Gabriella said. "Emma would be a more appropriate representative of Marguerite than I."

Emma blushed, but did not offer any objection.

"William would make an excellent Mephistopheles," said Miss Vayning, with a little laugh. "With a pointed moustache, and a flame-coloured suit, he would look the part to perfection."

"I have no objection, if you will take the character of the nurse," drily answered William Landale.

"And Faust?" asked Gabriella, secretly vexed that she was not pressed to take the character of Marguerite. "I presume that to perform the garden scene in 'Faust,' without the hero being present, would be as bad as to

play 'Hamlet' without introducing the Prince of Denmark."

"Charles Pleydill would do admirably," said Sackville.

"I?" said Charley, with an alarmed air. "Not I."

"Why not?"

"Well, why so?"

The others, who liked the notion of the Faust scene, eagerly pressed Charley Pleydill to accept the part offered to him. When Gabriella came to the aid of those who were urging him—for they were really at a loss for performers—he was obliged to yield a reluctant and provisional assent; an assent regretted the moment it was accorded.

"Come, give us another scene," said William Landale, to Sackville. "It is really too bad to task you, but nobody else can think of anything. Heaven sent you to our assistance."

Sackville had been racking his memory while the others had been talking. He was, therefore, ready with another suggestion.

"You might make a splendid scene of Maria Theresa receiving the allegiance of the

Hungarian nobles. The beards and moustaches of our friends will be a decided advantage therein."

This was passed, after some discussion. Miss Vayning accepted the part of Maria Theresa.

"Maria Theresa was young and handsome, if I haven't forgotten my history," thought Charley. "But I suppose it doesn't signify. One must make concessions."

Young Eskell returned at this juncture with the "Abbot," which Madame Pasquali took from him, and opening it, made out the list of characters.

Miss Vayning suggested the arrest of Anne Boleyn. "Gabriella as Anne, and some of the girls as her ladies. Sackville must be the Duke of Norfolk, and you"—turning to William Landale—"Sir William Kingston."

These scenes were finally agreed on, and one or two others added. Then a discussion ensued on the subject of the dresses and adjuncts. The discussion was at its height when Signor Pasquali entered.

Like most Sicilian gentlemen, he was handsome — tall, well made, with a pale, clear

skin, large dark eyes, and an intellectual expression.

The company was now broken up into little groups, and Sackville Vayning was able to introduce Charles Pleydill, his friend, without much ceremony, to the husband of Gabriella.

Signor Pasquali was excessively polite, and even cordial in his manner. He had not much to say, being of a silent, taciturn disposition, but he conversed on the ordinary topics of the day for ten or fifteen minutes, then left the two young men, and went to speak to some of his wife's other guests.

Sackville Vayning brought his friend gradually within the little circle where his sisters were. Charley tried to be as agreeable as possible, and to be pleased with the three girls, for Sackville's sake, but found the task one not easily accomplished. On quitting them, and, with Sackville, joining the Miss Landales, he found that these young ladies were nearly as insipid and uninteresting as their cousins, having only one advantage over them—that of being pretty. Their prettiness was, however, of the babyish, pouting, dewy-rosebud, “pray-admire-me” type. Charley was

wishing heartily to be able to get away, and was standing apart, when Madame Pasquali came up to him—floating, with a curious wavy motion, as her habit was.

“I hope you do not find our society dull, Herr Faust?” she said, with a bewitching smile, which revealed the edges of pearl-white teeth against her red lips. Charley noticed how sweet and soft her voice was.

“No place in which the influence of Madame Pasquali’s presence was diffused could be dull,” he returned, bowing.

“Your compliments are too pronounced, Sir Englishman,” said Madame Pasquali, affecting a little displeasure. “I must tell you candidly that I dislike compliments.”

“You are tired of them, doubtless?” said Charley.

Madame Pasquali frowned. Her frown, happily, was only a shade less charming than her smile.

“They are generally meaningless, and often impertinent,” she said, curling her lip. “They are usually uttered with the view of showing the wit and ingenuity of the person offering them.”

Charley looked a little disconcerted. Madame Pasquali, observing the effect of her words, which had been spoken with the view of extorting further flattering remarks, adroitly changed the subject, and alluded to the *tableaux vivants*, earnestly impressing on him that he must not disappoint her and her friends by withdrawing his promise of appearing in one of the scenes.

He assured her that nothing could give him greater pleasure than to be of any service to her, but represented the state of his cousin's health, and told her that he did not like partaking of gaiety while Lord Deveril was in such a precarious condition.

"But he surely cannot wish to keep you immured?" said Madame Pasquali, looking up with a surprised glance. Her eyes were as clear as glass, and, despite their comparatively small size, very beautiful in shape, and dangerously fascinating in expression.

Charley was again disconcerted. This glance had a singular effect upon him. He felt as if he must do simply what she desired him to do—as if his own will were gone.

CHAPTER IV.

BY THE FOUNTAIN IN THE MACQUEDA.

MADAME PASQUALI appeared to possess the very unusual faculty of being able to have everything her own way. Even when those over whom she exerted her influence were most unwilling to obey her openly or covertly expressed wishes, they, as an invariable rule, yielded compliance after the briefest resistance.

Sackville had been lenient rather than harsh in the judgment which he pronounced on her. Cold, callous, artful, petty-minded, wrapt up in her own vanities, which would have been childish had they not been so mischievous, her chief delight was in making others miserable. Those innocent eyes, that soft mouth, were as complete a mask for her

real disposition as the velvet glove of the cat is for its cruel talons.

Charles Pleydill, during the week or ten days which preceded the exhibition of the *tableaux vivants*, found his time well-nigh monopolized by the women who made Madame Pasquali's house their general rendezvous. At first his attentions and services were claimed by all, more or less; but after a few days he was relinquished to Madame Pasquali and the two Miss Landales. Of the Sicilian ladies with whom Madame Pasquali was acquainted, he saw very little.

Gabriella Pasquali desired to appropriate this handsome young Englishman entirely. By insensible degrees she drew him more and more into a state of bondage—into bondage of the weight whereof he was scarcely conscious, and in which the chains were hidden by flowers.

At the end of ten or eleven days, Gabriella had established confidential relations with Charley. It is impossible to follow step by step the windings and entanglements of a vain, artful woman. It is, perhaps, as interesting, though hardly so profitable, to watch the

rapid, delicate spinning of the web which she weaves round a victim, as it is to stand by and regard the skilful evolutions of a spider engaged in constructing his architectural plans.

Before he knew how it had come about, Charley found himself engaged in a mildly sentimental flirtation. He had not forgotten Lucille, but he was in a fair way to make a fool of himself.

"Take care, take care," said Sackville Vayning to him, more than once. "You will of a surety come to grief, as—as I did. Even I had the excuse that she was not married. Mind what you are about."

Charley began by laughing, and ended by becoming angry. Then he found it easier to simply ignore the subject than to brave the mingled ridicule and remonstrance of Major Vayning.

"Sackville chooses to misinterpret," he said to himself. "It is absurd. I care no more about her than—than she does for me. It is ridiculous, playing the old foggy at his age."

Sackville Vayning was, perhaps, the only

- person in the world whom Gabriella feared. In his presence she always carefully abstained from indulging in any of her dangerous fancies.

Gabriella contrived, by her usual sleight of hand, to take the character of Marguerite from Emma Landale, and appropriate it. Emma Landale, who had little designs of her own, was, as far as her insipid nature would admit, very wroth at this, but did not venture to openly complain, as she knew by past experience that she should be made to appear completely in the wrong.

The *tableaux* were at length ready for display. A large party assembled, prepared to be astonished, and to accord any amount of enthusiastic applause. Every scene was admired, but the Faust and Marguerite *tableau* was voted, by universal consent, to be the most beautiful of all, and the most appropriately cast.

"Gabriella never looked so pretty as she does to-night," Miss Vayning said, and everybody agreed.

"William Landale looks Mephistopheles to perfection," said young Eskell; and this was also conceded.

"Faust is not bad," said some one.

"He looks stupid," said some one else.

"No, not stupid—only sentimental," said another.

"People generally do look stupid under sentimental circumstances," somebody added.

Signor Pasquali had not attended any of the rehearsals. The scenes were, therefore, as new to him as to his wife's guests. He had applauded as the others did until this *tableau* of Faust and Marguerite; but, when the curtain rose on this one, he stood perfectly silent in a distant corner of the room, with a darkened brow.

The innocent pretty air with which the Marguerite pulled the flower to pieces, her downcast eyes, her confiding attitude, her charmingly becoming dress, were all admired.

Gabriella had arranged that dancing should succeed the *tableaux vivants*, and the evening was altogether a triumph for her as hostess. She changed her dresses with marvellous rapidity, and the scenes had scarcely been concluded, and the rooms re-arranged with celerity by the servants for the dancing party, when she presented herself in the freshest and

most elegant evening costume, to receive the compliments of the company, which she accepted with easy nonchalant grace.

Madame Pasquali had danced two or three times with Charley, and once with Sackville Vayning, and once with a Sicilian gentleman, Signor Valentini, when she went into the balcony to inhale the cool air. She found her husband there, looking moodily into the street beneath. He turned, as the rustling of her dress caught his quick ear. Gabriella was obliged to advance into the balcony, and she passed her gloved hand through her husband's arm. To her vexation, he drew back, and shook her off.

Gabriella looked at him in affected surprise. Then ensued one of those quiet, scarcely spoken, bitter matrimonial quarrels sometimes indulged in by married couples. Gabriella tried to the last to maintain an outwardly conciliatory manner.

"You will earn for yourself that most abominable of all characters—that of being a married flirt," said Signor Pasquali.

"Absurd! You are unjust and ungenerous, Ludovico."

“You will break my heart, Gabriella.”

Gabriella still tried to defend herself, and even to laugh away his accusations that she favoured the young Englishman overmuch. After an absence of some ten minutes, occupied in this scarcely agreeable manner, she returned to the room where her company were still dancing.

Charley and Sackville Vayning at length came away. Charley could not help noticing the coldness of Signor Pasquali's manner as they were exchanging a good-night. Gabriella took care that her adieu should be delivered when no one was by; and she infused an indefinable tenderness into her voice and eyes as she uttered the simple words of farewell. Charley left Sackville Vayning at the Victoria Hotel, and then jumped into the vehicle which was to take him home.

“I must be cautious,” he muttered, between the whiffs of his cigar. “Yes, I must be careful. Sackville Vayning was right—right in one particular. She is a foolish, innocent girl, and I don't think that fellow, her husband, cares for her. At the same time, he is as jealous as a Turk. It is very hard for

her, poor girl! She is no flirt, but she is——”

His reflections grew rather hazy at this point, however. He continued to inform himself that he must really be careful not to give the shadow of a cause to Signor Pasquali for jealousy; and the next morning found him at the house of Madame Pasquali. What influence drew him there he could not tell.

“After this,” he said to his conscience, which kept on ringing changes about caution and prudence and common duty—“after this, I shall not have occasion to go there so often. It could not be avoided. I almost wish Sackville had not thought of introducing me there at all. He was the one to blame for any nonsense that may have passed. When the Vaynings and their cousins go, I shall not be obliged to call at the house so often. Her husband is ferociously jealous, I can see that. She has told me so, indeed; and I must not give him the slightest cause to think ill of her, poor girl!—poor, innocent child!”

The Vaynings lingered, for Madame Pasquali was wonderfully ingenious in providing or suggesting amusements. The weather was

lovely, and it happened that they knew a great many of the people either staying or residing at Palermo. So Charley found that, without positive rudeness, he could not absent himself from the house of the fair tyrant. He admired this beautiful girl, but he did not dream for an instant of falling in love with her. Away from the influence of her wiles and her fascinating beauty, he hardly ever thought of her; and even when with her, it was the idlest flirtation that passed between them. Gabriella would have been pleased to see him a prey to some mad, reckless passion for her. That being apparently a triumph denied to her, she was tolerably content to obtain his exclusive devotion and homage. She was disappointed in finding that he was not disposed to break his heart about her. She was obliged to rest satisfied with offerings prompted by gratified vanity, sympathy for the isolated state in which she represented herself as existing, and by idle gallantry.

One day, in a moment of confidence, Charley told Sackville Vayning of his cousin's anxiety regarding the succession; and then he spoke of Lucille Charteris, in carefully

guarded sentences, as the next heir after himself. He also mentioned his cousin's extreme desire that he, Charley, should marry.

"I suppose you will, some time or another?" observed Sackville.

"I suppose so. It seems to be inevitable," replied Charley. "But this is not the time to talk about it. I wish he would not let his mind be disturbed by such ideas at such a time."

"It is very natural," said Sackville, "that he should wish to transmit the fine old title to a secure line of succession. What a romantic story that is, about Miss Charteris. I feel quite interested in her, from what you tell me. Is she handsome?"

A short pause intervened before Charley answered. "Very," was all he said then.

"What style?"

"Tall, dark, with a quantity of magnificent hair, and a figure like an antique statue."

"She is young, of course?"

"She is about twenty, I suppose," Charley said, with obviously affected indifference.

The last day of the time appointed by the Vaynings for their visit arrived. Madame

Pasquali resolved to give a grand amateur concert on the last night of their stay. Whatever Madame Pasquali undertook to do was certain to be a success. When she announced her intention of organizing this concert, people absolutely intrigued for an invitation, and those who failed in obtaining cards envied their more fortunate acquaintances.

"Now, really, when the Vaynings go, I shall cease my visits to the Pasqualis," Charley again assured his troublesome conscience. The very morning of the concert, he repeated, "After to-night I will not go again."

That morning he brought a magnificent bouquet for Madame Pasquali. She was to sing. She had a delicious soprano voice, and she had arranged this concert with the view of achieving a triumph for herself, although she had put forth a flimsy fiction that it was to give a final pleasure to her cousins. The two younger Miss Vaynings and Emma Landale were also to sing.

The rooms were crowded when they came. Just before the visitors began to enter the splendid apartments, Signor Pasquali presented his wife with a bouquet. Gabriella

accepted it with a faint show of gratitude, and swept from his side, a cloud of lace and blush-rose silk. As she left her husband, she made a grimace at the flowers which he had given her.

"What a bore!" she muttered. "But I shall carry Charley's. Ludovico will think it a mistake—I can easily explain it as I please."

In twisting up her pretty features at the unconscious flowers, Gabriella forgot that her face and form were reflected in every mirror that lined the rooms. Ludovico, unfortunately, caught sight of her grimace, and turned away with a devouring, jealous rage in his heart.

The first piece was a trio by Martini—"Vadasi via di quà"—sung by Clara Vayning, Gabriella, and Signor Valentini. As Gabriella caught up her fan and handkerchief from a table in the little room set apart for the use of the vocalists of the evening, she deliberated for an instant as to whether she would or would not dare to take Charley's bouquet with her. Her heart misgave her, and she entered without it.

Signor Pasquali, from one of the extreme

corners of the brilliantly lighted drawing-room was watching for her. A spasm of anger seized him when he noticed that she did not carry the bouquet which he had given her.

The trio was a great success, for although Clara Vayning was a very indifferent singer, Gabriella and Signor Valentini sang almost as well as professionals. A perfect tempest of applause saluted the termination of the piece, and then the singers retired. They were replaced by Emma Landale and the youngest Miss Vayning, who drawled through "*Quis est homo*," from Rossini's "*Stabat Mater*." They then retired, and again Gabriella appeared. She came in with a flash, to sing a piquant little serenade. This time she had a bouquet.

Signor Pasquali saw it was not his, and his heart was filled with such anger that, feeling he might not be able to control it, he quitted the room. Charley also saw this bouquet, which Gabriella carried with a coquettish, half-defiant air, and placed on the piano, as she was going to accompany her own song. Sackville Vayning knew nothing of this by-

play, but he observed that his cousin Gabriella was flushed and excited.

The programme of the evening was divided into two parts, an interval of about a quarter of an hour elapsing between the termination of the first and the commencement of the second part. At the end of the first part, Sackville Vayning and Charley, among others, stood up to look round the room.

"What a brilliant company Gabriella has drawn here to-night!" said Sackville. "I never saw so many beautiful women, dressed to such perfection, as I see here this evening."

"Ah!" said Charley, vaguely. An uncomfortable feeling, a strange presentiment, a curious foreboding, oppressed him—why, he knew not. He could not trace the sensation to any reasonable cause—unless it might be that Gabriella's evident emotion on entering the room the second time had affected him unconsciously.

Sackville looked at him with some slight surprise, and was about to make some remark, but checked himself, as he saw that Charley did not seem disposed to talk.

Signor Pasquali entered as Sackville raised his head.

"Ludovico looks as if he were in a bad humour," Sackville observed. "He looks as black as thunder. I hope Gabriella has not been playing any of her pranks."

This was uttered in a very low tone, almost a whisper.

Charley glanced at Signor Pasquali, who had flung himself on a chair. The signor drew off his right glove, and as he raised his hand to shield his face from the light, resting his elbow on the back of the chair, and his forehead against his open palm, a ring which he wore flashed and scintillated in the rays shed from the wax candles in the chandelier above him.

The extraordinary brilliancy of this ring caught Charley's attention. Idly, scarce conscious that he was looking at it, he watched the sparkling of the diamonds with which it was set, as they gleamed like tiny sparks of fire. He was not thinking about the ring at all, however; he was thinking of Gabriella, of Lucille, of—many things. He was specially occupied, indeed, in congratulating himself

that nobody knew of his floral offering to the prima donna of the night.

Signor Pasquali had taken the easiest and shortest way to ascertain who had given his wife the bouquet which she had carried instead of the one which he had offered. On leaving the drawing-room, he had sent a message to Madame Pasquali, to ask her to come into the library. Had she dared, she would have refused to go, but she was afraid to answer his message except by obeying what she felt to be a command. She knew too well that although she might brave her husband to a certain point, there was a limit which she might not pass.

She floated down a back staircase, where no spying servants could see her and comment on her looks and actions.

Ludovico was sitting by the centre table when she entered. All the rooms in the house were lighted profusely, and the library had been filled with flowers and transformed into a kind of nook where thirsty people could come and partake of ices and other refreshments. It had been crowded some six or seven minutes previously, but now the solitary

figure of the master of the house looked conspicuous.

“ So, madam ! ” said Signor Pasquali, as his wife presented herself, glowing with beauty.

Unfortunately for herself, Gabriella was cowardly, although she acted in a way which would have demanded the utmost audacity and presence of mind. She was more afraid of her husband than of anybody else—nay, she feared no one in the world but her husband ; for although she had a dread of Sackville Vayning’s opinion, it was a different kind of feeling. He did not require to say a word beyond the two he had uttered. She attempted to enter on the explanation which she had already fixed upon as the most plausible. It was by an accident, she declared, that she had taken the bouquet offered to her by another in lieu of the one which he had given to her.

Ludovico was cold, almost impassible in his manner all the time. He had not accused her, he had not uttered a syllable after the two words he had spoken on her entrance. Even now, he did not become outwardly excited. He rose and approached her, looking steadily in her face.

"Who gave you the bouquet for which you threw aside the one I gave you?" he demanded.

She tried to evade this plain question,—in vain, for she was at last obliged to answer it.

"I thought so," was his only comment. "You have never ventured so far before, madam."

Gabriella essayed to defend herself. She had done nothing, she declared, to merit this censure, or to incur his anger.

"Nothing!" echoed Ludovico. "Nothing!"

His looks terrified her, and she shrank back. Often had they bickered, and even quarrelled, so she was prepared for any ordinary manifestation of displeasure; but to-night his very calmness frightened her. She knew not what to say, and therefore remained silent.

"Leave me," he at length said, after regarding her sternly for some little time, watching the changes in her face as she grew paler and paler.

Glad of the excuse for flying, Gabriella made her escape, and darted upstairs, the way she had come. When she reached her boudoir she felt so faint that she was compelled to

despatch a message to the singers to say that she was suddenly seized with indisposition, and should not, she feared, be able to rejoin them.

When she quitted the library, Signor Pasquali drew off his right glove, and approached a small cabinet. He opened this, and from a drawer, the spring whereof was cunningly hidden away amid a quaint grouping of mediæval carving, he took out a tiny red box, containing a ring, which he placed on his finger. This ring he contemplated for an instant with a smile more ominous than any frown could have been. Then he replaced the box, closed the drawer, fastened the cabinet, and returned to the *salon*.

The non-appearance of Gabriella created much surprise among the audience, who marvelled and speculated until the intelligence was spread that she had been attacked by sudden indisposition. Her absence completely spoilt the second part of the evening's entertainment, for the other female singers, with the exception of one Italian lady, were hardly listened to.

Sackville Vayning was on the point of

speaking to Charley on the subject of Gabriella's unexpected illness, but a second and more prudent thought restrained him.

As the concert would not terminate until late, Gabriella had given Major Vayning a room for the night. It thus happened that he did not accompany his friend, Charles Pleydill, when the latter quitted the house.

The oppressive sensation that had attacked Charley in the drawing-room of Gabriella, vanished when he emerged into the open air. The night was a beautiful one, the sky was cloudless, and the moon shone like a broad silver shield from the heavens.

Charley lighted a cigar, and walked down the street, humming a few bars from the trio which had opened the concert. He had just turned the corner of the Via de Toledo, and passed the circus which adorns the intersection of the streets, when he was stopped by a man wrapped in a dark travelling cloak.

"A word with you," said this man, speaking in French.

Charley had never been troubled with nerves—few men are at six and twenty,—still, he could not help feeling startled by the touch

on his sleeve at that hour in this lonely place.

"What do you want?" he demanded. Looking closer, he saw that he had been addressed by the husband of Gabriella. "Signor Pasquali!" he exclaimed, a cold thrill running through his heart.

"Come this way," said the signor, leading him in the direction of the Macqueda.

When they reached the white marble fountain—the exquisite statues of which gleamed in the silvery moonlight—Signor Pasquali stopped abruptly and turned.

"Decidedly unpleasant, this," thought Charley. "A row is imminent. I wish I hadn't been such a fool, getting myself and other people into difficulties. However, the mischief is done now. I don't think I am a coward, but I must confess, I don't relish it."

Signor Pasquali folded his arms, and regarded the young favourite of his wife for some moments in profound silence. The light was behind him, so that he stood out a black figure against the deep blue sky, while the rays of the moon fell in a luminous flood on the slender form of Charley, who wore a

dust-coloured summer overcoat. It was late—or, rather, early in the morning, so there was no one in sight who could interrupt the interview—only those marble statues to bear witness, silent, immovable. At last the signor spoke. He was calm, though savagely bitter and vengeful. He would not hear a word from Charley, who tried to defend himself from the sweeping charges hurled at him; the intensity of his jealous rage was carrying him beyond the bounds of reason, although he was outwardly so cool, and enunciated his words with such soft clearness.

“Mark me,” he said, “I do not come here to complain and vent a weak resentment. I have come to tell you that when Ludovico Pasquali feels himself wronged, he avenges his injuries on those who have been mad enough to dare to wrong him.”

“I know of no one who has wronged you in thought, word, or deed, Signor Pasquali,” said Charley, while his conscience smote him with the recollection of those idle, foolish half-hours which had been already regretted by him.

Ludovico Pasquali laughed scornfully.

“Good night,” he said, abruptly.

It happened that Charley had rested his hand on the edge of the marble fountain, so there was nothing particularly remarkable in the gesture of Signor Pasquali when he struck his closed fingers across the hand lying next to him, grazing the wrist slightly. Charley withdrew his hand without answering, and did not move until the form of his unpleasant interlocutor disappeared in the cloudy mist of the distance.

“I don’t think I occupied a specially distinguished position during the interview,” reflected Charley, turning to leave the field of battle. “Of one thing I am certain—*vide licet*, that I shall never go to the house of the fair Gabriella again. I don’t care about her—and I cannot imagine why I have made such a fool of myself. What a donkey I have been—confound it! I ought to repent in sackcloth and ashes. But the mischief of it is, that I don’t know how far I may have imperilled her with—— Confound it! I wish I had never gone near the place.”

He looked about, and soon found a vehicle to convey him to his cousin’s villa. When he

had flung himself on the seat, and lay back to consider the subject of his unpleasant adventure, he suddenly remarked that his left hand was smirched with crimson blood, flowing from a sharp scratch on his wrist. He looked at it in some bewilderment; then remembered the slight glancing blow struck by Ludovico Pasquali; and surmised justly that the wound had been inflicted by the ring worn by Ludovico on one of his fingers—the ring Charley had noticed once during the evening. The blood was still trickling out from the scratch, so he bound his handkerchief round his wrist, and thought no more of it.

He would have thought differently of it had he known that his blood was already fatally imbued with a subtle narcotic poison, emanating from one of the stones in that ring which had caught his idle gaze.

As he jumped out from the vehicle in which he had come, and paid the driver, the young man was conscious of a faintness, and an unpleasant burning of the tongue. He found some difficulty in ascending the staircase; and getting to his own room, flung himself, dressed, on the bed, intending to be there just

for a few moments, until he should recover sufficiently to ring for his servant.

"I don't know what is the matter with me," he said to himself, passing his hand feebly over his forehead. "I have taken nothing. I drank nothing but a glass of iced lemonade at Gabri—Madame Pasquali's. Yes—I took a vanilla ice, and—I can hardly think. I am tired, I suppose. That was an unpleasant meeting with—— Well—I shall never go there again, on that I am resolved. I never felt so fatigued in my life; but I never was dragged into a row before, and perhaps my nerves have received a shock. I never knew I had any nerves, at any previous stage of my existence."

The faintness increased—so did the burning in his mouth and throat. He rose, and endeavoured to drink some water which he poured from a decanter standing on a side table. The effort to swallow, however, was too painful, and he put down the glass with a stifled groan, throwing himself on his bed once more.

"May God forgive me all my sins!" he murmured. "I believe I am dying."

By degrees he floated into a kind of sleep, and then he forgot everything.

Ackroyd, Charles Pleydill's servant, never went near his master until summoned to do so on the morning subsequent to the amateur concert at the house of Madame Pasquali. It happened that Ackroyd did not go at all until Lord Deveril asked his own man, Langton, if Mr. Charles had come home the previous night. Langton, being an old man, and having been with Lord Deveril before Charles was born, always called Mr. Pleydill "Master Charles." Langton did not know whether "Master Charles" had come home or no, and so went to inquire of "Master Charles'" own man. Ackroyd did not know, so went to the door of his master's room.

There was no answer to his respectful tap. No answer to the second, nor to the third. Presuming from this that his master had not returned, and that the room was empty, he turned the handle of the door, and opened it. This was another proof that his master was not in the room, for he always shot the bolt before going to bed.

Ackroyd entered, and saw no signs of the

room having been occupied during the previous night. He advanced carelessly, until he reached the door leading to the dressing-room, which was ajar.

No; it was plain his master had not returned, but was staying in town.

Having arrived at this conclusion, Ackroyd just glanced into the dressing-room, to see that everything was arranged for the return of his master. There was the great bath filled as it had been left the previous night, only it was cold instead of tepid, and everything was ready.

Ackroyd pulled over the door of the dressing-room, and was turning to leave the chamber, when he uttered a wild cry, almost bounding from the floor.

Lying on his bed, stretched at full length, in a perfectly rigid attitude, dressed in his evening costume, his eyes closed, his face absolutely colourless, was Charles Pleydill. Ackroyd ran over and touched his master's hand, and found it cold as ice.

Ackroyd's master was dead.

The man, in his bewilderment and horror, went spinning hither and thither about the

room before he bethought him of ringing the bell. The moment this idea struck him, however, he seized the rope and rang a peal that brought half the household tumbling excitedly into the chamber.

In ten minutes the terrible news was known to every one in the house except the master thereof.

Langton, Lord Deveril's valet, was at his wits' end to know what to do. After a brief consultation with Ackroyd, he did what was the only thing to be done under the circumstances—sent off a messenger for Doctor Macdonald, the physician who attended Lord Deveril, and who happened to be attached to the regiment in which Major Vayning held a commission. Langton and Ackroyd agreed that there had been some foul play, but also that they would not mention their suspicions until the doctor gave his opinion.

It was difficult to evade Lord Deveril's inquiries, for he wondered greatly at his cousin's absence. They were evaded by some means. Langton knew that the slightest shock would be fatal to his master. At last, after the lapse of an hour, Doctor Macdonald

arrived. He was a tall, thin, dry, wiry Scotchman, with a twinkling eye, and a cynical mouth. Langton received him, for Ackroyd, almost with tears in his eyes, had begged of the old man to undertake all responsibility. In a few words Langton explained to Doctor Macdonald why he had been sent for, and then led the way upstairs.

When Doctor Macdonald came down again, his brow was clouded. Langton's attempts to sound him were vain. He would say nothing on the subject.

"I should wish to send for Major Vayning, who was, I have reason to believe, the most intimate friend of—of the deceased gentleman," said the doctor.

Langton was so relieved at the possibility of dividing the responsibility, that he instantly suggested to the doctor to write a message, and despatch it at once. Doctor Macdonald took his advice, and wrote a hasty note, which was sent by one of the servants. Scarcely had the man quitted the house, however, when Major Vayning came in.

"You must have crossed my messenger on the road," said Doctor Macdonald, after ex-

changing a hurried salutation with the major, who was one of his oldest friends—one of his old college chums, in fact, though seven years his junior.

“Your messenger?” said Sackville Vayning, surprised.

“Something terrible has occurred.” The doctor told him.

Major Vayning was so horrified that he sat down, absolutely trembling, and pale as death.

“I cannot realize it. How—how was it?” His voice sounded strange even in his own ears.

Doctor Macdonald, who had been standing, sat down, too, before he could answer. For he had been greatly attached to the ill-fated young man. Then he spoke in a whisper.

“It—it may have been apoplexy—but——”

“Apoplexy! A young, healthy man like—I thought apoplexy only seized those who were old, and of a full habit?”

“That is a popular error. I have myself known of some cases where those struck down by apoplexy were young men, not only thin, but meagre. Besides, Rochoux says—and he is a very good authority——”

“Yes, yes, my dear friend——” Sackville Vayning passed his hand over his forehead to collect his thoughts, and also to check the doctor, who was going off into a learned discussion, the man of science getting the better of the man of feeling and the friend. “Well, you said that it might be apoplexy; then you were going on to say——”

“That it—it might be, and is, I strongly suspect——”

“What?”

“Poison!”

“Good God! No: God forbid! No, no, no! Impossible! Don’t say such a thing as that. Who should— It is impossible.”

“I wish I could be as confident as yourself that there has been no foul play——” The doctor compressed his lips.

“My dear Macdonald, who could have had any interest in doing such a devil’s deed?” Sackville asked, almost imploringly, looking at the doctor.

“How can I tell? Mind, I only give it as my impression that—that what I have hinted at may be the case. I hope sincerely that I may be wrong in my suspicions. Mind,

too, that I have not the most distant idea of implicating anybody, for I cannot conceive who could have had any reason to wish him—to wish him ill.”

Major Vayning's face suddenly grew whiter than it had been. He raised himself, and drew back in his chair, and looked so startled—such horror was expressed in his wildly opened eyes, and blanched cheeks, that Doctor Macdonald looked intently at him.

“Oh, Gabriella, Gabriella!” muttered the young soldier, in too low a tone for Doctor Macdonald to catch the words.

“Well, what is it?” asked the doctor, questioning the suspicions expressed in the countenance of Major Vayning.

Major Vayning rose from his seat, a perceptible shiver passing through his frame.

“My dear doctor,” he said, slowly, “should you find *your* suspicions correct—God forbid they may be so!—then, then I will tell you on what ground mine have fallen. Until your suspicions are verified, I dare not breathe mine. Does Lord Deveril know of this?”

“No. I am placed in a cruel predicament. As for keeping it from him, to think of such a

thing would be an absurdity. Yet, in his present state, the slightest shock will be certain death to him. What to do I cannot think."

Doctor Macdonald also rose from his chair, and stood leaning against the table. The two men stood looking in each other's faces for several minutes, in perfect silence.

"He must be told, without a doubt," said Sackville, half as an assertion, half as a query.

"You know, he will miss—miss his cousin during the day. I dare say he already wonders at the — his prolonged absence. Either you or I must tell him. In the first place, Langton would have no tact in breaking such intelligence; and in the next, the man would, I know, refuse to undertake the task. What is to be done?"

"I don't know," Sackville said, shaking his head. "On you will fall the burthen. No one could tell it more gently, or more judiciously than you; and you know all his ways and peculiarities. You must remember I am comparatively a stranger to him."

"I would give a thousand pounds, if I had the money, and could find anybody as a fit

substitute, to be released from the necessity of dealing this death-blow to the old man. Sure nobody ever was placed in such a cruel position."

"Are you speaking figuratively or literally when you speak of a death-blow? I mean, do you allude to the body or the mind?"

"Sure as you are standing there now, that poor old man will be dead to-morrow morning—for he must be told, that is clear enough. I must go now and break the news to him as best I may."

"My prayers go with you," said Sackville Vayning, wringing his friend's hand. "I shall wait for you here."

Doctor Macdonald went away, closing the door of the room in which he left Major Vayning, and went to the room where Lord Deveril usually sat. He tapped, for the doctor was not a man addicted to ceremony, and entering the little apartment, found his patient seated in a huge arm-chair by the open window, through which floated the fragrance of jessamine, orange-blossoms, myrtle, and other odoriferous flowers.

Perhaps no one ever performed a task more

unwillingly, or with more adroit delicacy, than Doctor Macdonald executed his task that morning. He would, in all likelihood, have felt even more fearful of the effects of the revelation he was obliged to make, had he been aware of the anxiety with which Lord Deveril had been thinking about the succession. Doctor Macdonald did not touch on his suspicions, merely letting Lord Deveril know the simple fact that his cousin had expired suddenly during the night.

Very little change passed over Lord Deveril's face as he listened to the cautious recital. On the table beside him was laid, among other things, a small scent bottle, containing a powerful decoction of smelling-salts and hartshorn. This he occasionally took up, and applied to his nostrils; and he also, from time to time, uttered a gasping sigh. Otherwise he testified little emotion.

Doctor Macdonald's professional knowledge had not deceived him. He had finished his narrative, and was looking keenly at his patient, when Lord Deveril extended his arms in a wild kind of way, and uttered two or three gasps, as if drowning.

"Only a girl left!" he cried. "Christ have mercy on me!"

Then he fell back into the arms of Doctor Macdonald, and all was over.

It was well that Doctor Macdonald kept his suspicions regarding the real cause of the death of Charles Pleydill concealed, for the result of his medical examination was far from satisfactory. All trace of the poison—if poison had been ever there—had disappeared from the system, and the signs resembled those of apoplexy so closely, that a less accurate judge might easily have mistaken them. As he could discover no proof of what he had asserted to be his opinion, he was compelled, against his actual conviction, to declare that the cause of death was apoplexy. He therefore gave in a certificate to that effect.

"Tell me," he said to Sackville Vayning, "on whom did your suspicions fall when I mentioned mine?"

"That is an unfair question," answered Sackville. "As you cannot prove a crime, it would be worse than useless to point at a criminal."

CHAPTER V.

AT VÉFOUR'S.

SIR THOMAS JERVOISE had been for some months endeavouring to pass away the time pleasantly in Paris. The attempt was not a very successful one. Everything bored him. Had he been a *petit crevé*, sated with every variety of pleasure this earth affords, he could not have been more completely used up. He could scarcely say, himself, why he lingered, idling, dawdling, in Paris ; the only reason he could assign was that he felt less bored, and more at home there than anywhere else. Paris he knew thoroughly well, and such acquaintances as he possessed—friends he had none—were to be found within the walls of “the only city in the world worth living in.” In London he felt something like a stray sheep—bewildered and alone.

The sense of boredom was daily growing more intolerable, in defiance of every remedy he tried for shaking it off. He was not unhappy, nor ill; he suffered from no disorder of body or of mind: he was simply bored—always bored, turn whichever way he would.

One night, towards the middle of May, after an evening spent in amusements, the programme whereof was not of so edifying a nature as to render it desirable that it should be preserved, he lounged from the Boulevards in the direction of one of the smaller, more obscure streets.

From the Rue Richelieu, the Rue du Mont Blanc, the Rue Marivaux, the Rue Dauphine, and one or two other places, *maisons de jeu* have, as everybody knows, been entirely banished. But for all that, when a good and sensible papa isn't looking, fair Lutetia's little ones may be found tossing about speckled bits of pasteboard, or white, red, and black balls, made of ivory, with as much gusto and dexterity as their grandfathers and grandmothers ever did in the days whereof Doctor Véron and other entertaining gossips tell us.

The place to which Sir Thomas Jervoise

directed his steps professed to be a quiet restaurant, which profession it belied in practice.

The young baronet passed through, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and pushed open a door which was to the casual observer merely a large sheet of looking-glass. A man was sitting at the foot of a flight of stairs, in a kind of little alcove; to him he nodded familiarly, and then, taking two or three steps at a stride, went up a richly carpeted staircase, and pushed open a second door, at the top of the staircase.

The room he entered was superb, almost lined with pier-glasses, decorated with almost every imaginable species of elegant ornamentation, draped with velvet. A great number of people—all men—were assembled within the apartment, all more or less in a state of evident excitement. There was a musical jingling of glasses and gold coins, amid louder clattering of tongues. These men, gathered in the large, well-lighted room, were gambling.

Sir Thomas Jervoise was apparently well known to several who were there, for he exchanged a word or a nod with nearly a dozen.

He did not stay long—not, perhaps, more than three-quarters of an hour; but, when he came away, his pockets were heavy with napoleons, five-franc pieces, and bank-notes—all fairly gained, for he was a marvellously skilful player. He had hoped to lose to-night, with much the same feeling that some men go into battle with the hope of being killed. The sense of boredom was heavier on him to-night than it had ever been before.

On emerging once more into the street, he found that the rain was descending in a dull, miserable drizzle. It must have been raining for some time, for the pavement was bright like a sheet of glass, and reflected the rays of light from the lamps above. The muddy strata had not been washed into view as yet, but the night was a thoroughly dismal one. There was a cold, whistling wind, which spirted the rain-drops in the faces of the occasional unlucky passengers, come from which quarter they might, and whirled their umbrellas round, as a spiteful Puck might have done.

“Ugh!” muttered Sir Thomas, standing for a moment inside one of the doors of the

house. He had a chronic dislike of disagreeable weather. "Sacre ! what a night. Blue devils and monkeys, what a night !"

He waited for a few minutes, in hopes that a *fiacre* or a stray cabriolet might pass by. The *café*, however, was in an out-of-the-way street, so there did not seem much chance of obtaining any kind of vehicle. Even the pedestrians were few and far between. A rag-picker passed, then a porter labouring under a big sack, then two workmen in blue trousers and blouses, clattering on the wet pavement in their wooden sabots ; then an old woman, whose umbrella kept twirling round in her hand, dragging her about mercilessly in its evolutionary attempts ; then an umbrella of eccentric size, shape, and colour, attached to which might be discerned, on closer inspection, a peculiarly unhappy little old nondescript.

"There isn't the slightest use in waiting," Sir Thomas assured himself. "I must chance getting a wet skin, and take a run for it."

He thought for a moment of his own luxurious little cab, which he never used on these night expeditions, for he had a fear of letting

any of his movements fall under the observation of servants. But there was scant comfort in thinking of absent conveniences; so he buttoned his light summer overcoat up to his throat, pressed his hat down over his brows, thrust his hands into his pockets, and darted out like a shot. Struggling against the wind and rain was by no means pleasant, but it looked more disheartening gazed at from the interior of the illuminated, comfortable restaurant than it was when fairly breasted. Light of foot, and knowing his way thoroughly—no one in Europe knew the windings of Paris better than he—Sir Thomas was not long in reaching the Palais Royal. For a moment he hesitated, meditating on the advisability of going home, then he turned into Véfour's.

The light silver gray overcoat which he wore, although so thin you might have folded it up and almost concealed it between your hands, was absolutely impervious to wet, being water-proofed. Thus, when Sir Thomas took it off, he was dry as to his upper garments, his boots and trousers being merely splashed. When he had shaken his overcoat before

entering, he was as dry and comfortable as possible.

Throwing himself on one of the chairs, flinging his overcoat upon the back of another, he called for a cup of coffee and a tiny glass of cognac brandy, the which he began to drink in a leisurely manner, resting his elbow on the table and his forehead on the palm of the hand raised to his head. As he sat in this attitude, a spectator taking any interest in him, and looking upon him with a curious eye, might readily have imagined that he had lost everything in his possession, and was on the brink of the most irretrievable ruin. A thousand fiends, born of *ennui* and weariness of spirit, surged up around him, and followed him wherever he went, as the hell-hounds raced after Bürger's "Wild Huntsman,"—always, always.

His reflections were not pleasant. "I don't know what to do with myself," he thought, playing idly with his spoon. "I have felt like a miserable hangdog wretch ever since I—since I came into my property—my fifteen thousand per annum. When I was Tom Dallas, and lived in the Quartier Latin, and

paid five and twenty francs a month for my lodgings, and when my dinner cost me only a couple of francs, a bottle of Mâcon included, I was a thousand times happier than I am now, Sir Thomas Jervoise, Baronet, living in the Hôtel des Princes, in apartments for which I disburse three thousand francs a month—‘a palace in the midst of pleasures,’ with a little army of domestics at my beck; and my dinner, costing me fifty or sixty francs, gives me no pleasure. I think, long ago, I felt more pleasure in getting hold of a bottle of sherry than I do now in having Clos-Vougeot, Romanée, or Chambertin placed before me by an obsequious slave. I think the pleasantest dinner I ever sat down to I had at Bonvalet’s. I really enjoyed myself that night. I wish I had never fallen on my good luck. What good does it do me? No good—not the slightest good in the world. Better . be a wild sparrow than a caged eagle. Where’s the fun of roulette or rouge-et-noir if you know that, lose as you may, it will make very little perceptible difference to you? And if you win, what difference does that make? What good does all this money do me, which

I have in my pocket, I should like to know? If I threw it into the Seine I should not miss it. If I understood anything about the matter, I'd set up a racing stud, and take to betting on the turf. But then I don't; and I hate grooms and jockeys, and everybody of that ilk. I know what I shall do. I shall go to Monaco. No, I won't, though. I think—— ”

He lifted his head, ordered a second cup of coffee; and looking at his reflected image in the mirror opposite, re-tied his cravat.

“I wish I could care about something—anything,” he said, resuming his meditations. “I don't care about one solitary thing on this earth. Yes, I do, though! Ah! But as to hampering myself with a penniless girl—that would be simply madness!—yes, sheer lunacy! What a splendid creature she is, though! I am greatly afraid that some day I shall make a fool of myself, and marry her. I wonder how my little Ettie gets along. I should have married her if I had not unluckily seen Lucille. Poor little Ettie! She is a pretty little thing, but no more to be compared to Lucille than a daisy is to be com-

pared with the queen of the garden. Besides, she isn't pretty. She sometimes reminds me of a bull terrier, with her square jaw and her projecting nether lip."

Here he leant both elbows on the table, and his chin on his folded hands, falling into a more profound reverie.

"I wonder if I were once settled down—absurd phrase—would this feeling of weariness go off? I fear it would increase. I wonder if I had been a fine, big, clever villain, capable of committing splendid crimes and all that sort of thing, should I feel this vanity and vexation of spirit? I wonder if I had been always a swell, going to college, and thrashing bargemen and that, with an earl for a father, and unlimited pecuniary resources, should I have been better off? I wonder if I had stayed at home—I wonder if I wrote to my venerable friend in the spatterdashes—— Singular and highly unsatisfactory theory of 'might have been.' No, I'll either go to Monaco, or to the East—oh, hang the East!—or I'll go over to England—dear, delightful, perfidious old Albion—and marry Lucille. I'd do anything I thought likely to chase away this

perpetual fog of weariness and sense of being eternally bored. I wonder is there any one thing in the whole world that I could care about—always excepting Lucille, for I really do care about her as much as I could care about anything? It must be an enviable peculiarity, that of being able to care desperately—like some fellows who are perpetually trying to break their necks, running after some ridiculously trifling object, with a degree of impetuosity which it is perfectly astounding to witness. I think I'll go over and torment old Vayning." A half smile came over his face as he thought of the jeweller. "But no, second thoughts are best—I won't. I never was spiteful, and even as a boy I never spitted flies or cockchafers. Poor old dog! let him lie in peace. I think I'll begin afresh, leaving the past behind me, and see what that will do. I have nothing to regret; at all events, only two things. I am rather sorry I went in for that cursed business of old Vayning's. Yes, if I could undo it, I would. And the other thing I am sorry for is—that unfortunate accident that night in the Rue du Bac. Poor Gustave—poor boy! I would give every-

thing I have in the world, all my hopes, if I had any in particular, to have him, living and well, with me to-night. I think I never cared about anybody except him and—and Lucille. Poor lad, I dare not think about him, though his face haunts me sometimes—often.”

He drew in his nether lip, and held it under his teeth for a minute or so, looking at the mirror opposite in a dreamy kind of way, as if he saw the pale, handsome face of Gustave staring at him from thence. He caught up a newspaper at random from a table near him, and tried to fix his attention on the open page which happened to be folded outwards. The effort was a vain one, and suddenly catching up his overcoat, and flinging the paper back on the table whence he had taken it, he left the *café*. For some moments he waited, in the anticipation that a vehicle of some kind would appear in sight, and presently a cabriolet drove up, from which alighted two gentlemen, who went into Véfour's. The driver, late as it was, was glad of an extra fare, and willingly took up Sir Thomas, who ordered him to drive to the Hotel des Princes, corner of the Rue Richelieu.

The two gentlemen who had alighted were Englishmen. One of them accidentally took up the paper which Sir Thomas Jervoise had scarcely five minutes before flung down—*Galignani*—and almost the first paragraph which met his eye announced the death of Edward Frederick Basil Dalrymple, twentieth Baron Deveril, and of his heir, Charles Pierrepont Pleydill, at Palermo, a fortnight previously.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE BOTANIC GARDENS.

SIR THOMAS JERVOISE so seldom received letters from anybody that he was somewhat surprised when one was carried to him the morning after he had delivered his gloomy monologue at Véfour's.

This letter was from the lawyer to whom he had written, asking for information on the subject of the income possessed by the Baron Deveril.

Sir Thomas had given this man general orders to send him any news that might be gleaned from time to time regarding the movements of Lord Deveril and of Charles Pierrepont Pleydill, Esquire. The news he sent—writing of these two persons for the first time—was startling. Sir Thomas, who

was breakfasting, read the letter through twice, and then laid it down on the table with a deep, audible breath.

“Lord Deveril dead—his heir dead—and Miss Charteris—Lucille, Baroness Deveril, with thirty-five thousand a year!” he said aloud. “Am I awake, or am I dreaming? Have I missed the tide? Lucille Charteris, Miss Alvanley’s governess and dependant, would have flung herself into my arms if I had asked her, but—but would the Baroness Deveril be equally ready and willing? Bon Dieu! Does she know about it—about this stroke of good luck, I wonder? I shall try my fate, at all hazards. I must be in England to-morrow. I shall never forgive myself if I have missed my chance.”

He went over to a small table which stood near the window of the exquisitely furnished little room where he was breakfasting, and unlocking a small writing-desk which was placed on the table, he sat down, and hastily scribbled a few lines to the man from whom he had received the letter which he had just read, ordering him to find out where the Alvanleys were staying, whether in town or

in the country, and what particulars he could find of the present Baron Deveril. Even with Mr. Jasper Carttar, Sir Thomas was cautious. Sir Thomas was not one of those men who wear their hearts upon their sleeves.

"You need not write," he concluded, "as I shall be in London in a day or two, and your letter would probably cross me on the journey. When I reach London, I shall let you know of my whereabouts."

He was in London the next day. From Morley's, between two and three o'clock, he drove as fast as a hansom could carry him, to Lincoln's Inn, for it would have been, he found, impossible to wait until he could write to Mr. Carttar and receive his reply, even by a messenger. A day would be lost, and every hour was of importance in the present juncture of affairs.

"The Alvanleys," Mr. Carttar informed him, in answer to his hasty inquiry, "were in town, staying at the house of Lady Creswell. He did not know anything about the present Lord Deveril. In fact, there was a little bit of a muddle about it, as they did not know where to find an heir, or even if there was one."

Sir Thomas drew a long breath. He scarcely lingered to give a civil farewell to Mr. Jasper Carttar, but almost ran from the dingy room which that gentleman styled his "chambers," down the rickety stairs, and sprang into his hansom. He had luckily made a memorandum in his pocket-book of Lady Creswell's address. Just as he got into the vehicle, he remembered that the viscountess and he had once had a passage of arms, which he had no inclination to repeat—

"Confound it, I can't go *there*. Suppose the old hag should—should——"

"Where to, sir?" asked the man, speaking gutturally through the little trap in the roof. "The deuce," said Sir Thomas, to himself, "I suppose I must tell the man to go somewhere, or he will set me down as an escaped Bedlamite. There will be no use in going back to Morley's.—Regent Street," he called to the driver. The man banged down the trap, flourished his whip, and dashed off.

"I may as well go there as anywhere else. I shall lunch at Verrey's, which will help me to get over the afternoon. I may as well go that way as any other, as I have nothing to

do ; and perhaps Fortune may favour me, or I may think of some lucky notion on the road. I cannot go to the house of that old she-detective, that is very clear. I suppose I must write to Lucille. She will, no doubt, wonder what has become of me all this time, and think me faithless, and all that sort of thing ; but, bah ! with any woman a little soft sawder will smooth over the greatest difficulties. Once persuade the pretty creature that you are dying of love for her, and you may say or do anything, and be forgiven. I wish I had known of this remarkably disagreeable cause and impediment why I cannot reach the side of my charming Lucille. How magnificent that head of hers would look surmounted by a coronet of diamonds. Well, what the deuce *am* I going to do now ? I feel uncommonly like a fool, trundling along without aim or object."

The cab went so quickly that he was in Regent Street, at Verrey's door, in a very short time. Sir Thomas jumped out, and had taken some loose silver from his waistcoat pocket to pay the fare, when he saw an open carriage drive past, at a moderately rapid pace.

A carriage in Regent Street at four o'clock in the afternoon was not a specially remarkable object, but in this particular carriage were seated four ladies whom Sir Thomas knew—Mrs. Alvanley, her sister-in-law, Ettie, and Lucille.

None of the occupants of the carriage saw the baronet. A thought struck him, and he said to the driver of the vehicle from which he had just alighted—

“You see that carriage—the coachman and footmen have gray and green liveries?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Well——” Sir Thomas hesitated for an instant, the order was such a strange one. “Will you—do you think you could follow it without the people in the carriage or the servants knowing anything about it?”

“I’m fly,” said cabby, with an evident wink, which Sir Thomas prudently would not admit he noticed. “All serene. I’m your sort. Jump in, sir, and make your mind easy.”

Cabby fancied he saw the whole mystery of his fare’s sudden whim. Sir Thomas jumped in, and they followed the carriage at a modest

distance. They passed along Regent Street, Piccadilly, and so on, street after street, until at last they stopped at the gates of the Botanic Gardens, Regent's Park.

It was a fashionable fête day, and the road was blocked up by such an immensely long string of carriages and vehicles of all descriptions on either side that there was no danger of Sir Thomas being noticed by the occupants of the Viscountess Creswell's carriage. The baronet waited till the ladies whom he was watching alighted, and then got out himself, and dismissed his Jehu with so liberal a fee that the charioteer aforesaid drove off rejoicing. The crowd was so dense that the ladies had passed in some minutes before he could reach the little lodge at all. He threw down a sovereign, which one of the men waiting to take tickets looked at, but did not touch.

"Have you a voucher, sir?" asked the man.

"A voucher?" repeated Sir Thomas.

"What do you mean?"

"We cannot allow anybody to enter unless they have a voucher from a Fellow," said the man.

"Ah—hum—I forgot." He had not known anything about it, but thought fit to affect forgetfulness. "To be sure. How very awkward! I have been away from England, and have nearly forgotten all these things."

His brow grew as black as a thunder-eloud, for it was unpleasant being stopped in this way, in the middle of a crowd of supercilious-looking people, who, with their finest suits, had assumed their most coolly insolent manners. One or two young men and women raised their glasses and glanced for an instant at this queer Hottentot, who was so ignorant of the manners and customs of respectable people as not to know the minor rules and regulations of the Royal Botanic Society. Sir Thomas drew back, with a muttered curse.

"We don't always want vouchers, you know, sir," the man explained. "Only on special occasions."

"What shall I do now?" Sir Thomas asked himself. "I thought I was uncommonly clever. What a devil of a predicament!" As he spoke, he felt his arm touched, and, turning, found himself face to face with Lord Randolph, whom he had met in Paris, and with whom

he had been intimate for some time. In fact, he had undertaken to show the young nobleman "life" under certain phases and forms, of which Lord Randolph, even in his most fantastic reveries within the walls of St. Boniface, had never dreamt.

"I didn't know you were in England," said Lord Randolph.

"Why, I arrived only this morning from Paris. I came out here with the intention of getting rid of half an hour, but I am really as ignorant of your method of conducting things in England as if I had spent my life in Juan Fernandez. I find that I cannot enter this paradise of lilies and roses, pretty girls and brass bands, unless I have a voucher from a Fellow—whatever that may be. I am as much at sea in these little matters as if I were a veritable foreigner."

Lord Randolph happened to be a Fellow, so he was able to give the magic "Open Sesame" to his friend Sir Thomas, who again threw down his sovereign before the Jove of the little rustic lodge, and passed in with the young earl, who walked with him for a few minutes, and then left him to his own devices.

Poor little Ettie had been pining, pining like another Elaine, since her knight had ridden away. She confided in no one. Even with Lucille she had grown cold and strange. Mrs. Alvanley, struck by her altered looks, and perceiving but too plainly that she was brooding over some constantly corroding thought, guessed what was passing in that young heart, and, in her anxiety, held a counsel with Lucille. The young governess knew perfectly well what was the matter with her pupil,—still, she could not betray her, and answered Mrs. Alvanley with some ambiguous suggestion that some change would be likely to benefit Miss Alvanley. “Change? but what kind of change—how could they get change for her?” Mrs. Alvanley asked, almost in despair; for the worthy woman was really fond of her step-daughter, and would have done anything “for her good,” if she only knew what to do. Unfortunately, she was not of an inventive turn of mind. At this juncture, the viscountess wrote to Mrs. Alvanley, inviting her and Ettie to visit her in London for a month, including Lucille in the invitation, “which,” said Mrs. Alvanley,

"is very convenient, and, I'm sure, very considerate." The squire made no objection, and gave freely such money as he was asked for, under pressure of representations from Mrs. Alvanley that his daughter would die if she did not have a little change and amusement after her close application to study during so many months past.

Lady Creswell, like a friendly old spider, was very much pleased to get little Ettie into her web. She was hatching a couple of favourite schemes for the aggrandisement of the family. She intended, since she had seen Ettie, and noticed her prettiness, and discovered that she had a handsome fortune—she intended to mate her with some young branch of aristocracy. Her own son, Louis, she destined for some young denizen of Mayfair, who should, if possible, be rich, but at all events, of blue blood. "Perhaps," she thought, "the young people may take a fancy to one another; however, there is nothing like strengthening a family, and it would be better if they linked themselves to other families." She had taken Ettie about to as many places as she could without actually

“producing” her, for she meant that in another summer, when her education would be a little more advanced, she should be introduced into society under the auspices of a lady who lived in the very centre of the fashionable world.

Elaine—Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable, Elaine the lily maid of Astolat—was doubtless silly, a poor fond and foolish maiden. Yet, somehow, she gains our sympathies; we pity and love her, standing as she does between Vivien and the Queen Guinevere. How rarely do we meet with these soft simple maidens, whose hearts are capable of but one passion, which either makes or mars their happiness! Lilies, however, do not grow by the highway, nor even in fields and meadows: and we might almost count on our fingers those maidens in history or romance who have been willing to lose all for love.

Ettie's naturally pale face had grown yet paler, her thin form had become almost like a reed. She was always brooding, always thinking—she who once had scarcely thought at all, but lived happy and ignorant among her pets—always thinking about the knight

who had pretended to love her and had then cruelly ridden away.

“He never loved me—he never cared for me. He thought I was a foolish, ignorant child, and he was laughing at me all the time,” she would cry to herself in the dreadful watches of the night, tossing on her restless pillow, which was often wet with her tears. Poor foolish little girl! “And I must love him always—he is so handsome and so good. Yes, he was good, and I think he found out that he did not really care for me, although he thought perhaps at the time that he did, and that it was wisest to go.”

She still kept her Tennyson, and read it continually, until she could repeat many of the pieces by heart. She would sigh over Mariana, and compare herself to that unhappy lady. “Ah, I walk forlorn—forlorn!” she would moan, in the cold gray morning light. “Ah, I wish I had never seen him! Yet, no—even to escape what I now suffer, I would not give up the sweet memory of those delicious afternoons when I used to meet him, and he would walk by me as I rode, or we would ride together; or of those hours

when I was last in London, when he used to come, and when he gave me this dear book, which I shall always keep for his sake. I shall always love him. I will never marry anybody else." Poor forlorn little Ettie!

Lady Creswell's first care was to supply her niece with every requisite for an elegant toilette, and then bundled off the things which the young girl had brought with her from the country. She made such a point of Ettie's having her ears pierced, that at last Ettie consented to submit to the painful operation, rather than offer resistance to the entreaties of the viscountess. By degrees, Lady Creswell encroached after this concession, until, at the expiration of about a fortnight, Ettie began to assume the aspect of a fashionable young lady.

On this morning, when they visited the Botanic Gardens, Ettie had been dressed with scrupulous care, under her aunt's superintendence. Although her taste was belied to the casual observer, by the gaudy, old-girlish style in which she chose to array her own fine form, the viscountess was very discriminating when criticising or counselling others

on the subject of dress. Most judiciously had she followed nature in ordering Ettie's toilet on this occasion, and thereby produced an excellent effect. She had adopted a severe, what artistic amateurs might term a pre-Raphaelite style for the young girl, as best suited to her face and figure.

A little black velvet hat, shaded by a long gray feather, surmounted her head, and displayed to the utmost advantage the rich dark hair, which had been woven by Lady Creswell's own maid into an inconceivable variety of plaits. Ettie had particularly beautiful, lustrous hair, and it was Lady Creswell's object to heighten her few advantages. A white lace *fichu*, and a silver-gray dress made & trying, but most successful, toilette. Never had she looked better than she did to-day.

Lucille looked regal—dressed to perfection in a black silk dress, with a delicate white bonnet.

Only one short year before, Ettie would have been amused by the gay scene into which she entered now with such listlessness. She looked at the flowers without displaying the slightest interest, and walked or sat mechanically, following the movements of the

others. Lucille in vain tried to attract her attention towards the beautiful floral treasures scattered around in such lavish profusion.

How had Lucille borne the departure of the man who had gained her heart? Her feelings were mingled. It is hard to enlist sympathy for these seemingly cold, proud natures, perhaps because they reject it when offered; but they need it even more than those who cry aloud, and winnow away their grief in lamentations. She would not creep into a corner, and lie down to die: rather would she stay to the last, in the front of the battle, her head raised aloft, her hand on the standard, not betray that she was wounded until she should fall lifeless. Yet she was not more cold than the little Ettie; but her life had been so different—she had known much sorrow, gone through many bitter griefs and trials, the like of which Ettie had never even heard of. She was older, if little more experienced; and her thoughts, her aspirations, her hopes, were of a loftier range than those of her young rival. Over Ettie, she had, too, another advantage—she could, to a certain extent, see more of the character and disposition of the man of whom

neither could cease to dream. She had, too, much pride. Ettie had none. She knew that she had a rival in the young girl whom she had been engaged to instruct and train. Not even instinct told Ettie that Lucille might be, and possibly was, a rival; happily, for she knew herself to be so totally inferior to Miss Charteris in beauty, education, or even common intelligence, that she would have regarded anything like successful rivalry with her as hopeless, and might have done something desperate. It would be difficult—impossible to define the feelings of Lucille. How can the feelings of these proud, lofty, queen-like women be dragged into the broad light of day, when they are scarcely whispered even to their own hearts?

The fair, fresh beauty of both these girls—Ettie and Lucille—created a little stir of admiration in the Gardens. The viscountess had been absent so long from England, that very few recognized her; therefore curiosity was for a while baffled regarding the two distinguished-looking girls whom she was apparently chaperoning.

“Who are they?” was asked by several

persons. "I don't know," was the invariable response of those who, in virtue of their reputation for knowing everybody and everything, were applied to for information, until at last the Marchioness of Carluthen, who was attended by her son, the marquis, met the little party, and stopped to address them. The marchioness was the lady on whom the viscountess relied for her niece's successful introduction into society; the marquis was the man whom, in her secret heart, she destined for Ettie.

The marchioness was that terror of terrors, "a most remarkable woman:" remarkable both intellectually and physically—remarkable from the crown of her bonnet to the heels of her double-soled boots. How to describe her often puzzled those who wanted to conjure up a word-photograph for the benefit of those who had had the happiness of never being in her company. It is when we try to picture forth people as they are that the pen or the pencil seems weak, and even the most skilful workman might be pardoned if he quarrelled with his tools. The marchioness was not pleasant to look upon, though she would fasci-

nate the gaze when once it fell on her remarkable form. She was tall, bony, and broad-chested, and somehow reminded one of an ancient grenadier of that gallant corps, the Old Guard. Her hair was white, with a curious-looking tinge of a curious shade of yellow—like a silver wave of the sea, glittering in a ray of sunlight; her eyebrows were jet black, and overshadowed a pair of piercing black eyes—terrible eyes, which made you ready to confess any number of uncommitted crimes, merely from fear of their accusations; her face was long and angular, the nose well shaped, the chin square, the lips grim, and just narrowly escaping the imputation of coarseness. In the matter of costume she was an old “Guy”—emphatically. Fine linen she wore from necessity, but the only occasions on which she condescended to array herself sumptuously in purple was when she visited her Majesty at St. James’s, or went to the opera, or, sometimes, when she looked in at some particularly fashionable ball-room, in the interests of some young *protégée*. On those occasions, not even Jove, in the midst of all his thunders, could have been more un-

approachably magnificent than she. She was one of those who carry the *lictor fasces* of Society through Vanity Fair. Only one thing delighted her more than breaking through the countless laws of etiquette and the small observances of everyday life herself, which was, to pounce down on those who infringed the least of them. Plead as they might, "*Ignorantia facti excusat*," she answered back, "*Ignorantia non excusat legem*," and inflicted the heaviest penalties the law allowed.

The marquis was a young man of some five and twenty summers—tall, fair, and muscular, totally unlike his mother in person as he was in disposition and character. His mother lavished all the tenderness of her strong old heart on him, whereby she left herself with no affection for anybody else. He cared not a jot for her, the resources of his mind being all swallowed up in one idea—hunting, supplemented by an idea which was, perhaps, only an offshoot of the one idea—racing.

The Marchioness of Carluthen had seen Ettie once or twice, but her son had never seen the young girl. His mother introduced him, and then he walked by her side, en-

deavouring to render himself as agreeable as possible—a task which he essayed under adverse circumstances, for Ettie would only reply in monosyllables, and did not seem at all interested by his conversation. He tried every topic he could think of, with the same unsatisfactory result.

The marquis thought Ettie a very nice little girl, if rather stupid. But he was much more impressed by Lucille. He hooked his glass between the upper and nether eyelid of the left eye, by that marvellous *legerdemain* which, by incessant practice, combined with flexibility of facial muscles, is achieved by young fops.

“Who is that girl?” he asked of Ettie.

“Which girl?” demanded Ettie, looking at him with an unconscious frown.

“That girl in black silk, who was walking with you.”

“My governess,” answered Ettie, curtly. His manner displeased her.

“Ah!” His tone changed. He liked Ettie’s brusque manner—it was so different from the soft lustrous polish of the girls whom he met every day, and who bored him. He turned

his attention exclusively to Miss Alvanley, and at last contrived, by a random observation, to attract her interest. He accidentally touched on the only two subjects which could rouse her interest at all—music and riding.

They wandered about through the masses of human beings and flowers, in and out of the tents, Ettie looking back every now and then to see that they did not lose their party. Fortunately for Ettie, her cavalier did not torment her by drawing her attention to orchids, rhododendrons, pelargoniums, or choice specimens of any kind; for he was not gifted with floricultural tastes himself, so it mattered very little to him whether he saw or ignored their existence. He took her from one point to another, and showed her the fern-house, the lake, the rustic bridge, the medicinal section, and all the other spots of interest in the grounds. At last the viscountess suggested ices, whereon they adjourned to the refreshment-room, which was crowded with visitors. As they moved across the grass, Ettie suddenly uttered a cry, which she stifled instantly. She turned very pale, however, for she had that moment caught sight of Sir Thomas Jervoise.

Lord Carluthen looked at her. His first idea was that she had trodden upon something which had hurt her.

“What is the matter?” he asked.

“Nothing—that is—nothing, thank you,” she answered. She spoke so decidedly that he felt it would be rudeness to persevere in his questions. After this he found it impossible to obtain the slightest degree of attention from her, and they walked after his mother, the viscountess, and Mrs. Alvanley, in profound silence until they reached the refreshment-room.

Lucille, considering her position, had fallen entirely into arrear, and walked alone, at a moderate distance from the others.

Sir Thomas Jervoise had been watching for a favourable opportunity of addressing her. He took advantage of her present comparative isolation, and having approached with a certain caution—for he was really afraid of the viscountess,—he presented himself before Lucille just as she was passing the fern-house, and as the party with which she had been walking had entered the refreshment-room. Lucille was about to follow Ettie, who had

been the last to enter, when Sir Thomas stopped her.

So little had she anticipated seeing him—although at that precise moment she had been thinking of him—that she started.

“Sir Thomas Jervoise!” she cried, and then grew cold, absolutely as well as figuratively. Sir Thomas had never seen Lucille look so handsome, so proud, so unapproachable.

“Jove! what a splendid creature she is!” was his first thought. “If I have irretrievably missed my chance——” was his next. Generally, Sir Thomas Jervoise did not want for impudence, but at this moment he felt completely disconcerted. His brain had hitherto been fertile in ready excuses and plausible lies, and every variety of untruth and subterfuge, yet now he could not devise a connected sentence whereby to reinstate himself in the favour of Miss Charteris. “I arrived in England only this morning,” he said, at last.

“Ah.” Miss Charteris drew up her head as if the information did not concern her in any way whatsoever.

Almost as she spoke the chilling monosyllable, a few heavy drops of rain fell. The

company assembled hurried under shelter, for the clouds were so dark that the raindrops seemed to herald a shower. Miss Charteris wished to pass into the refreshment-room, where her friends were, but as Sir Thomas was standing between her and the place to which she desired to go, she could not, without obvious rudeness, press past him. He took her hand, and led her into the fern-house before she could resolve on what was her best course. "Come in here," he said, "and wait until the shower is over." He had recovered his usual self-command by this time, and had invented two or three plausible excuses for his absence and silence.

"My friends will perhaps——"

"Pardon me," interrupted Sir Thomas, "they will know that you are safe, and that you are simply sheltering."

He was in no hurry to begin his explanation, but walked by her side round the fern-house for some minutes, then began in a quiet way. "I have been plunged in a perfect sea of worry and torment since I last saw you, Miss Charteris," he said. "My affairs, during my lengthened absence from England—I had

been away from England since my childhood—my affairs had fallen into total disorder, being in the hands of a dishonest steward. I had the utmost difficulty in righting them.”

He went on to intimate, in a convenient, rambling style, using vague terms, that he had been chiefly induced to examine his pecuniary affairs by the desire which he had to settle down in life. As he proceeded, he was more and more emboldened by observing the coldness of Lucille's face change and soften, until he at length achieved the triumph of calling up a blush and a smile. He knew by her manner that she was entirely ignorant of the brilliant destiny which had suddenly opened for her.

It was, perhaps, one of the oddest places that could have been chosen for such an interview. There was a great, almost impassable crowd; for instead of the threatened passing shower a violent thunderstorm had broken. The rain was splashing, dashing on the glass roof, and running down the outer glass walls of the fragile building in streams; the thunder crashing overhead, and the interjacent streaks of forked lightning flashed across a murky

sky at brief intervals. The interior of the fern-house was gay and bright with colour and beauty of almost every description, and made lively by the hum of voices.

Lucille liked the roaring thunder ; it filled her with a strange kind of ecstatic awe and pleasure. Sir Thomas did not fear anything in nature.

After a time Lucille sat down on a rustic bench near one of the doors. Sir Thomas leaned over the back of this seat, talking to her most earnestly. He had a peculiarly low, clear, distinct voice, so, while his words were inaudible, even to those sitting close to her, Lucille heard every syllable.

By degrees the resentment which had risen in her breast against him vanished, and her manner softened so much towards him that, having made apparently reasonable excuses for the cruel manner in which he had played fast and loose, and for his absence and silence, he went on to assure her that his heart was entirely hers, and ended by asking her if she would be his wife.

The interview had begun by one of those strange reconciliations which sometimes take

place when there has been no quarrel, and it terminated by what was tantamount to an engagement. Lucille forgot Ettie—forgot the whole world. The scene before her disappeared, and she was alone with him whom she loved.

There was a good deal of flirtation more or less obvious going on among the ferns that afternoon, and Lucille and Sir Thomas were, perhaps, the least conspicuous pair of lovers there, so they escaped notice altogether.

The storm cleared off at the end of some five and thirty minutes. Sir Thomas prepared to depart, having arranged with Lucille that he should write to her grandmother at once, for she half reserved her answer until she could learn what Madame de Rochequillon's wishes were, although she knew almost to a certainty what they would be. He said he would not wait to see Mrs. Alvanley or her daughter, as—the reasons he gave were rather involved, but they satisfied Lucille, in spite of the fact that she did not catch a connected sentence of what he said.

“I should not leave you to find your friends, but I see Mrs. Alvanley standing by the door

yonder, looking everywhere for you," he said, half apologetically. Lucille turned her head, and in fact saw Mrs. Alvanley just inside the door of the refreshment-room, gazing in every direction, evidently looking for her.

"Adieu," said Sir Thomas, with one of those looks which lovers alone understand.

It was not until he had gone that she bethought her how he had not said anything of when they were to meet again. She supposed, however, that he would call the next day. Mrs. Alvanley caught sight of her as she rose; and looking from the window, beckoned so eagerly that she was obliged to run from her shelter to the good lady.

"We could not imagine where you had flown to," said Mrs. Alvanley, seizing on her with affectionate solicitude. "I hope you were comfortable in there. What a pity you didn't get in here with us! Are you dry and comfortable? I hope you won't take cold."

"Thank you, madam," answered Lucille. "I was perfectly sheltered from the storm."

"Dear, dear, I have been in a fidget about you. I am so glad we have found you. Come, you must have a little something. What will you have?"

"A glass of water, if you please."

"Nonsense. You have had enough water for to-day. A glass of sherry and a biscuit."

Mrs. Alvanley installed Lucille in a corner, where she would not be conspicuous or exposed to inquisitive looks, and then brought her a glass of wine and a few macaroons.

Ettie, like Lucille, was not in the least afraid of storm or its attendant terrors. She had thrown her head back, and looked up daringly at the vivid flashes of light, and looked so brave and beautiful that young Lord Carluthen began to take a most serious interest in her. He found himself watching the changes expressed in her clear eyes with a steady attention.

So fearful was Ettie that her step-mother or aunt would notice her preoccupation, and discover its cause, that she was feverishly gay, and not only listened with bright, burning eyes to what was said by Lord Carluthen and others, but talked away with a fluency, indeed a flippancy which was quite foreign to her usual manner.

When Lucille was settled in her corner, Ettie approached her. Lucille looked up, and

saw that Ettie's cheeks were flushed, and her eyes glowing. The young girl placed her head on the shoulder of her governess.

"Lucille," she said, in a low tone, "I have seen him. I saw him just before the rain began. Ah, I shall see him once more. Did you see him?"

"I did," answered Lucille, with gravity. "Sit down, my dearest."

"You saw him? Where was he?" asked Ettie, looking at her governess with widely opened eyes, a slight frown wrinkling her forehead. "He has not gone away, has he?"

"We will not speak of him now," said Lucille.

"Why not? Nobody will hear what we are saying. Everybody is talking."

"Ettie, you once told me," said Lucille, speaking slowly, but with painful distinctness, "you once told me that you would always love me. Your love will be put to the severest test that it could be subjected to."

"What do you mean?"

"Hush! Do not speak so loud"—for Ettie cried out so loud that those in their vicinity turned their heads. "We will not speak of this until we are at home."

"I must know one thing—is—is he still here?"

"No, he is not."

Ettie stamped her foot on the ground.

"Cruel, cruel, cruel," she muttered. "What does he mean? What do you mean?"

As she uttered the words, the truth flashed across her, and a little short gasping sigh, like the painful inhalation of breath which is made by a person suddenly strangled, escaped her. She started up, looking at Lucille with a glance which said a thousand things, and then almost ran over to where her step-mother was sitting. By this time the place was nearly empty, part of the crowd having ventured into the gardens again, part having retreated to their carriages.

"Mamma," she said, without looking at any of the others, "I must go home."

"Are you ill, child?" asked Mrs. Alvanley, staring at her blanched face, the very lips of which were white.

"Ill!" echoed Lady Creswell. "Are you ill, child?"

"Yes—yes—yes. I must get away from here," persisted Ettie, looking wildly at her

step-mother, half entreatingly, half defiantly. "If you don't take me away directly, I will go away by myself."

"What is the matter with you?" asked Mrs. Alvanley and Lady Creswell, simultaneously.

The marchioness, seeing something going forward, and noticing Ettie's white face, came a little nearer.

"Is the dear child unwell?" she inquired.

Ettie stamped her foot again with concentrated fury.

"She wishes to leave the place," said Mrs. Alvanley.

"Ah—um—the heat—the thunder. It does affect some people," remarked the marchioness, in her strong old voice, a mild imitation of thunder in itself. "Well, she bore up very bravely while the storm was going on."

Ettie allowed all the remarks, relevant and irrelevant, to surge round her, while she stood, her hand on the back of Mrs. Alvanley's chair, her face completely colourless, fully determined on escaping.

Lord Carluthen volunteered to see if Lady Creswell's carriage was close at hand, and

went off. Lucille approached, and stood near, to aid in sheltering Ettie from observation. Ettie did not take any notice of her, beyond shivering perceptibly when she came up. Presently Lord Carluthen returned, and the party left the gardens, all, with the exception of Ettie, taking formal leave of the old marchioness and her son.

The alternately cold and brusque attention displayed by Ettie had pleased Lord Carluthen in the most remarkable manner. He was greatly piqued when she quitted him without even a farewell glance, although she knew he had taken unusual trouble to find the carriage.

"She is the nicest little girl I have seen for ages," he thought, when he had handed his mother into her brougham, and prepared to depart on his own way.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ADVERTISEMENT IN THE "TIMES."

"HE loves me not—he loves me not—he loves another," was the burden of Ettie's thoughts, during the homeward drive.

When they got out from the carriage, and were in the hall, Mrs. Alvanley and Lady Creswell turned anxiously to Ettie. Some colour had come back into her face, but she still looked scared and ill.

"Do you feel any better, my dear child?" asked Mrs. Alvanley.

"Yes, I feel much better," answered Ettie, hurriedly. "I think I shall go up to the drawing-room, and lie down there on one of the couches; perhaps the pain may go off if I have quiet. I want you to come," she said, turning to Lucille, who had not uttered one

syllable since she had told Ettie that Sir Thomas Jervoise had left the gardens.

"Very well. I hope you will be better this evening, child, for you know I wish to take you to the Opera," said Lady Creswell, to Ettie. The young girl did not answer, but hastened upstairs, followed by Lucille. When they entered the drawing-room, she closed the door in her most brusque fashion, flung her hat on the centre table, and then wheeled round suddenly to her governess.

"Now," she said, without even seating herself, "now tell me what you mean. You see I have been able to control myself until now. Tell me——" Her eyes were glittering like sparks of fire, and her hands were clenched as she drew them almost behind her back with a curious half-frenzied gesture. Lucille could not reply, but remained standing like a guilty, self-condemned creature before her young pupil.

"It is you whom he loves—is it not?"

Poor Lucille felt as if she had acted like a traitor to her pupil-friend, and felt so guilty that she could not find words wherein to answer her. Her head dropped lower and lower as Ettie spoke.

"Did he know I was at the Gardens to-day?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know! He did not even mention my name, then?" cried Ettie, bitterly.

"He was with you all the time of the storm, I suppose, and he never so much as mentioned my name? He did not speak of me at all?"

"No, he did not," answered Lucille, in so low a tone that Ettie could scarcely catch the sound of the words.

"He was with you in that round glass building where the ferns were? What were you talking about all that time? But I know—I know perfectly well. He told you he cared for you, and only you—and it will break my heart, and you will have caused my death. I hate you, and I will never forgive you. Oh, Lucille, Lucille, I am so dreadfully miserable," she suddenly cried, altering her tone. "To think that he loves you—you—— Oh, Lucille, my heart is really breaking."

She abruptly ran over to Lucille, and threw her arms about her, and laying her head against her shoulder, sobbed and wept for several minutes. So astounded was Lucille

by this abrupt change in her manner, that she could not frame any connected sentence, or form of words in which to address her. Being close to an ottoman, she slid down upon its cushions, drawing Ettie with her. For some time Ettie remained lying in her friend's arms, even after her first ebullition of grief had subsided, uttering a gasping sigh every two or three minutes, her eyes closed, her hands, loosened from their clasp of Lucille's waist, lying, the one supinely in her lap, the other by her side. "Darling," at length whispered Lucille, "you will at least believe that I have not been to blame; that I have not undermined you in any way; that I have not taken any mean advantage of the secret which you confided to my keeping?" Ettie opened her eyes, and withdrew herself from the embrace of her friend.

"I don't know," she answered. "I cannot think about it. I don't know what to think, for my brain seems all of a whirl, somehow. I loved him very dearly—but now I hate him, and I hope I shall never see him any more. I don't hate you, but I don't love you as I did. I never can love you again. I feel as if I never could love anybody again."

She started up, and ran from the room, apparently possessed with some sudden idea. Lucille rose hastily, and tried to catch her, but she was gone before Lucille's hand could touch even her skirt.

With a swift step she passed up two or three flights of stairs and attained her own room, into which she flitted, like a wild, distraught creature. When she was inside, she went over to a ponderous chest of drawers, knelt down, and, taking a key from her pocket, unlocked the lowest drawer. From a nest of lace sleeves and collars, and other gauzy addenda of a feminine toilet—heaped here for her use by Lady Creswell—she extracted the Tennyson which Sir Thomas Jervoise had given her. She pushed the drawer back into its place, without locking it, and rose from her knees.

For about two minutes she sat with the book in her hand, her eyes swimming with tears, regarding the splendidly bound volume; then she carried it to her lips, and pressed repeated kisses upon it. Then, having opened the book, she began to tear the leaves into a thousand fragments, scattering them all over

the carpet, until she stood in a perfect mound of tattered paper. When she had torn the leaves into such small fragments that it was impossible to discern more than a spot of black on each morsel, she took the cover firmly in her silent grasp, and tore it into two pieces, which she threw upon the floor, striking at them in a passion of rage and despair with her foot.

And then, tired out with the excitement and fatigue of the day, she flung herself on her bed, and fell into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

When she wakened, she found her step-mother sitting by her. There was a very anxious expression on the good lady's face, for she could not conceive what could be the matter with little Ettie.

"How do you feel now, my pet?" she inquired, as Ettie opened her eyes.

Ettie started up, with a confused sense that something dreadful had happened, but what, she could not recollect. In an instant, however, the remembrance of her grief flashed upon her, and she sat up, her face flushed and her hair dishevelled.

"Are you better, dearie? Has the pain in

your poor head gone away?" tenderly said Mrs. Alvanley.

Before answering, Ettie threw a rapid glance at the carpet where she had scattered the torn fragments of paper. There was nothing to be seen—the mound of paper had disappeared. Mrs. Alvanley saw her look, and replied to it.

"I swept them up, and put them in the clothes-basket. I knew you had torn up the book in a passion, because I looked at the cover and saw who had—so I thought it wouldn't do to let the servants know anything about it. I must have the bits of paper quietly burnt." There was a silence for some short time.

"Mamma," at last said Ettie, without referring to the subject of which her mind was full, "some time ago my aunt asked me to stay with her. Do you remember?"

"I do—and you refused."

"Do you think she still cares to have me?"

"I don't know, child. I suppose she would like to have you—indeed, I am sure she would."

"I should like now to accept her invitation,

if you and my father didn't object—instead of going back with you, you know."

"Anything, my dear, anything that will be for your good your father is sure to agree to. You know it was only because you refused so obstinately to accept your aunt's invitation that he said you need not go. He agreed to it at the time, but left it to you to say if you would like it or no."

"I should like to stay with my aunt for some time, because I could not bear to go back to—to Derfordshire." With a sudden impulse she revealed her secret to her step-mother. Mrs. Alvanley listened, without interrupting her, only evincing her sympathy by a profound sigh. This confidence came strangely to her from Ettie, for between her and the young girl there had never been anything beyond a careless liking. "So you see, mamma, I could not bear to go back there."

"Poor child! But you must not be so foolish as to let this prey upon your mind." Mrs. Alvanley felt the inutility of her own counsel as she offered it. "Well, at all events, if you go about with your aunt, you

will have plenty of change and all that sort of thing, and that will work wonders, and make you forget all this. I wish you had never seen this man. I am afraid Miss Charteris is an artful, designing girl, although I liked her so much, and fancied her so good and simple and true."

"Ah, mamma, who could help loving him? he is so handsome and so—good."

"He cannot be good, or he would never have pretended to care for you——"

"Well, don't speak of it—indeed, it pains me so dreadfully to hear you talk about it. I wish you wouldn't. If my aunt would still like me to stay with her, I should like to do so, unless papa objects."

"That he will not, I am sure. I am quite certain he will be heartily glad of getting rid of the responsibility—at least, I don't exactly mean that, but he will be pleased to please you, and have you go into proper and suitable society. Then this Miss Charteris will leave us: she must go at once, or I shall dismiss her, of course."

Lady Creswell was, of course, overjoyed at the change in her niece's feelings with regard

to the invitation which had been offered and refused.

That evening, Lucille wrote to her grandmother, telling her of what had occurred that day. The letter was a long one, and full of presentiments not all of happiness, for somehow her heart was not overflowing with the pure felicity which she had imagined ought to attend on reciprocal love open and acknowledged. This dull sense of uneasiness—a strange sensation of evil—she attributed to her sympathy with poor Ettie's grief and despair.

She resolved that she would leave her pupil within the week, and join her grandmother. As she reflected on this, for the first time, she thought how wretchedly poor she was, and how rich the man whom she was going to marry. According to the strict code of love, she ought not to have even remembered the relative positions of herself and her future husband. Cupid disdains all questions of wealth or poverty, and will admit no rivalry with his neighbour Plutus. She would think of this, nevertheless; and yet she was not mercenary. She wished that she had been

rich, and her lover poor. Her thoughts descended even to the fact that to get together such needful attire as the bride of a rich man should of necessity possess would be—perhaps an impossibility. It was early to ponder such thoughts; but the mind is roving. It was with no triumph that she contemplated the fact of having secured a rich husband. On the contrary, she shrank, with a strange, unreasonable pride, from coming to him utterly penniless. All her life she had been proud and independent; and there is a probability that she did not love this man sufficiently to lose all lower feelings in a sublime devotion. For this man, whom she fancied she loved with fervour, whose image haunted her dreams by night and her waking reveries by day, she had none of that profound impassioned love within the depths of which worldly thoughts and interests sink as straws and weeds sink into the bosom of some broad, calm stream.

At the precise hour when Lucille was writing to Madame de Rochequillon, the marquise was writing, fast as her pen could travel over the paper, to the young girl. Mr. Wynstyn,

with whom she was on exceedingly friendly terms, had the *Times* sent from London every morning, and when he had skimmed its contents, he invariably offered the journal to the marquise. That lady cared little for politics, or even general news. Few persons, whose ideas are bounded by their own narrow little circle of hopes, wishes, and fancies, take a particularly ardent interest in public matters of any kind, or want to learn anything about the outer world; but she liked to know the leading items of news, so she was glad to see the paper. This very morning, having idly turned over the paper itself, she was folding it in the supplementary sheet, when the name of CHARTERIS among the advertisements in the second column caught her eye. She read the advertisement thus headed. It emanated from the firm of Messrs. Rashleigh and Ponsonby, solicitors, of Basinghall Street, and offered a handsome reward to any person or persons bringing information of the existence of any descendants of George Charteris and his wife Marie de Rochequillon. The characters swam before Madame de Rochequillon's eyes as she read. She fell back in her chair, and turned

of a ghastly white. The rattling of the paper in her nerveless hand was the only evidence that she was living. Her very lips had changed their hue. A strange kind of vague shadowy terror had seized upon her—even at this moment when the dreams of her life and her hopes of revenge seemed about to be realized. She uttered a sigh so deep as to be almost a groan, and hastily rising, went to a sideboard, and, filling a tumbler with cold water from a decanter, drank a few drops; then she returned to her seat, and took up the paper again to feast her gaze upon the advertisement. Often and often and often had she wickedly prayed to God that He would grant her what seemed now to be placed within her hand, but she did not think now of rendering even hasty thanks. After a while, having collected her faculties, she wrote a letter, addressed to Messrs. Rashleigh and Ponsonby.

When her usual time for relinquishing the paper arrived, she sent a civil message by Barbara to Mr. Wynstyn, asking permission to retain the supplement. Of course Mr. Wynstyn cheerfully replied that she was welcome

to it. The marquise seemed to have gained new life, to be young once more. She informed the lawyers who had advertised that she would be with them the next day; and impatient as a girl about to set out on a journey of pleasure, she went and packed up such things as she should require, building the brightest dreams, hopes, wishes, and fancies, while she tumbled the articles belonging to her somewhat scanty wardrobe into the box she meant to take with her. The box having been filled and locked—the cording she left to be done by the stronger and younger hands of the girls—she went downstairs to seek for Mrs. Wynstyn, to inform her that she purposed taking a hurried journey up to London on the morrow. At night she wrote a long letter to Lucille, telling her of the advertisement, and also of her projected visit to London. She wrote in a triumphant tone, full of wild hopes over her basket of glass wares.

The next morning, before Lucille's letter was even posted, the marquise started for town. She had not seen Mr. Wynstyn the previous afternoon, so she had had no opportunity for mentioning to him her intended

departure ; but when she descended she found him dressed as if for a journey. He was going up to London, he said, and, hearing from his sister that Madame de Rochequillon was going by the 8.30 train, he volunteered his escort.

This was advantageous for Madame de Rochequillon, in many respects. He drove her to the station, looked after her box at the booking-office, and finally paid for a first-class ticket. She had offered him the money to pay for a third-class ticket, not feeling justified, in her present straitened circumstances, in going by any other ; but he told her some rubbish about having a director's, or a renter's, or a shareholder's, or somebody's, or something's ticket, which gave him the privilege of passing as many people as he pleased, in such carriages as he chose to select, to any station on any part of the line, at any hour on any day.

On their arrival in London, Madame de Rochequillon and her gallant friend, Mr. Wynstyn did not separate at once. He gave her his address : he was staying in Buckingham Street, Strand. Madame de Roche-

quillon was rather puzzled to think of some modest retreat to which she might go, and mentioned her difficulty to Mr. Wynstyn, who seemed destined to be her guardian angel this day. He told her of a quiet lodging in Norfolk Street, Strand, and offered to take her there to look at the rooms, and see if they would suit her.

The rooms did suit her admirably. They were neat, and moderate as to rent. Mr. Wynstyn was personally acquainted with the old couple who kept the house, so Madame de Rochequillon was able to instal herself at once, engaging the rooms for a fortnight.

Being desirous of seeing the solicitors, Messrs. Rashleigh and Ponsonby, before meeting her granddaughter, she took a cab, and set out for Basinghall Street, arriving there at the time which she had appointed.

Two hours later she drove up to the house of Lady Creswell, in Eaton Square. She was a stately lady, and although she was dressed in the shabbiest of black silks, and had come in a common hack cab, the footmen received her with respect, as a possible dowager-duchess. "Yes; Miss Charteris was at home. They would see if she was at liberty."

The marquise was turning over a photographic album, in one of the three splendid drawing-rooms, with a hand literally quivering with suppressed excitement, when the door opened, and Lucille entered, bewildered.

"Ah, ha! my lady the baroness, I salute ye," cried Madame de Rochequillon, in French, receding as Lucille advanced, and sweeping a profound, old-fashioned curtsey.

Lucille stopped, and looked at her.

"You cannot have received my letter, dear grandma."

"What letter? You cannot have received mine. But no matter."

Lucille went up to her grandmother, and embraced her. The old lady was in such an ecstasy as to be scarcely able to contain her joy: The young girl induced her to sit down, but she did not speak, merely laughing and nodding her head like a madwoman. This was so unlike her ordinary manner that Lucille was sorely perplexed. Suddenly it flashed across her that in all probability she had seen Sir Thomas, and that he had told her the tender secret of that interview in the Botanic Gardens.

"Ah, my child, the dawn has come at last," said the marquise, placing both her hands on the young governess' shoulders, and contemplating her with ineffable delight. A kind of electrical joy seemed running through her entire frame. "How did you learn my news, dearest grandmamma?"

"Child, child! you are like the old woman, I like the young girl. How gravely you said that! But, mignonne, how did *you* learn the news?" Lucille drew back, confounded.

"Dear grandmamma, we are speaking at cross purposes, surely. Of what news are you speaking? It can be no common joy that makes your eyes sparkle and flushes your cheeks."

The marquise took Lucille's hand, and patted it as if in time to celestial music. "I see you don't know *my* news," she said, still softly laughing. "I thought you could *not*. The joy of telling you will be so exquisite, that I defer as long as possible imparting it, like a child who delays eating his bonbons lest the pleasure be over too soon. Come, I will tell you my news, and then you shall tell me your wonderful little piece of intelli-

gence." She rose, and stood before Lucille, on whom she turned the full fire of her brilliant eyes. "Lord Deveril is dead: his cousin, Charles Pleydill is dead—and you are the Baroness Deveril. You are better than the fine viscountess, on whose niece you attend in a humble capacity; for her title—that of her late husband—is only thirty years old, and yours has existed for eight centuries, and your income more than quadruples hers."

The marquise was bitterly disappointed on seeing the cool way in which Lucille received this news.

"You might as well be seventy years of age for all the vitality you display," she cried, throwing herself on the lounge beside Lucille. "Why, I shall soon be sixty, and I feel as much joy as a girl of eighteen might on the eve of her wedding-day. Are you an icicle? Do you consider what you will be now—what you will be in a few days, when these stupid little 'legal formalities,' of which the lawyers talk, have been gone through? I promise to receive your news, of which you spoke just now, with more demonstration than you have vouchsafed to mine."

"Do not be angry, my own dearest," said Lucille, putting her arms round the neck of the marquise, and laying her cheek against the withered face of the old woman. "I was so bewildered—it seems so strange,—and then, you know, I walk through the portal of death to my honours."

"Portal of death! Bah!—people must die. It is only in the natural course of things. Thousands of people die every day all over the world. What absurdity to be affected, even for a moment, by being informed of the demise of people whom you never saw."

"I have a strange feeling of mingled pain and——" she could not add *pleasure*, so remained silent for a moment.

"And your news?"

"You remember Sir Thomas Jervoise?"

"Perfectly."

"He has asked me to be his wife."

"Ah—ah! And you—what answer have you given?"

"I wrote to you last night, but my letter was not posted until this morning. I have consented."

"Some months since, I should have been

overjoyed to hear this. As it is, why, you could scarcely do better, unless you—— You will be very happy."

"Rank and wealth do not always confer happiness, do they, my dear grandmamma?"

"I would not permit misanthropy to dim the lustre of a diamond coronet, or wither the petals of the fair orange blossoms," replied Madame de Rochequillon, shrugging up her shoulder. "You love your future husband, I hope?"

"Yes, I love him ardently—passionately. I may say so now."

Lucille told her grandmother the entire history of her hopes and fears, from the beginning down to the events of the preceding day, when Sir Thomas had declared himself openly. She did not allude, even distantly, to Ettie, for she felt it would be treachery to betray the secret which she had in a measure surprised.

"He is disinterested, this Sir Thomas," said Madame de Rochequillon, musingly. "I like him; he is handsome and noble-looking. You ought to be proud of your husband. I should not say 'your husband,' for they say making certain of these things until they are

accomplished facts is unlucky. Ah me! I have not felt such joy as this since my own young days, when I was a happy bride."

"Shall you remain in London, or shall you return to Derfordshire?"

"I shall stay here. I do not intend to go back there until you are mistress of Stockleigh Court."

"I hope you will not miss his letter. He said he would write to you at once."

"Oh, it will not signify. Of course you will see him within a day or two, and then you can mention to him that I am staying in London." She took out her pocket-book—a large, old-fashioned, red-covered volume—on a page of which she scribbled her address, and gave it to Lucille. "I wish I could take you away with me, but my lodging is a shabby one for the grandmother of a rich English baroness. You must tell the people here of your altered position, and that you must leave them."

"It will be unnecessary. I have been dismissed," said Lucille.

"Dismissed!" echoed Madame de Rochequillon. "Dismissed? Bon Dieu! And wherefore?" Lucille hesitated for a moment, desirous, if possible, of not betraying Ettie.

"Just before you came, Mrs. Alvanley was with me, and she told me that after this month she should no longer require my services, as Miss Alvanley was about to make a lengthened stay with Lady Creswell."

"Indeed. It does not signify, however," said Madame de Rochequillon, stiffening her figure.

Poor Lucille knew perfectly well the meaning of her dismissal. She had not seen either Ettie or Lady Creswell since the preceding day, for she had remained almost a voluntary prisoner in her own room. Ettie was avoiding her; Lady Creswell had been out nearly all the afternoon, and Mrs. Alvanley was frigid.

"You see, dear grandma, it is fortunate for me that you have come up to town, for I wish to leave this house immediately, and I could not have done so had I not been able to find a shelter."

"You will tell these people of your altered circumstances? You will not be formally endued with the honours of your rank and wealth for some days—perhaps some weeks, but let them know."

"Why need we speak of it, dear grandma? I see no necessity."

"As you please. Still——"

The old marquise did not gain her point, for Lucille was desirous of getting away as quietly as she could. She was deeply grieved that Ettie should avoid her, and her sensitive nature had been pained by the coldness of Mrs. Alvanley, whose manner was so different to what it had hitherto been. For Lady Creswell she cared little, if at all. Before Madame de Rochequillon left Lucille, it was arranged that Lucille should join her in Norfolk Street the following day, and write from thence to Sir Thomas Jervoise.

"Soon, my darling, you will have a more fitting abode, when you are Baroness Deveril." Then she kissed her, and went away. Not once during the interview had she hinted at her old desires for vengeance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WEDDING AT ST. PAUL'S, KNIGHTSBRIDGE.

LUCILLE told Mrs. Alvanley that she should like to quit her the next day, if she had no objection. Mrs. Alvanley, of course, did not offer the slightest impediment to her departure, and insisted on paying her to the end of the quarter; but she softened a little in her manner, for she felt that in reality there was not the faintest proof that Lucille Charteris had acted in otherwise than a straightforward, honourable way, and she was ashamed of her coolness during the brief interview they had had that afternoon.

Ettie was obliged to see her governess that night, it being settled that Miss Charteris was to go early the following morning. They were together for a few minutes only, for

Ettie, who could not conceal her coldness, was fain to allege a violent headache in excuse of her evident anxiety to abridge the parting. Then Lucille went away in a cab, without having revealed what her grandmother had told her.

Before she left Eaton Square, however, she wrote to Sir Thomas Jervoise, informing him of her change of residence, and giving him her new address. She told him of the unexpected change in her circumstances, and that her grandmother had assured her of the fact that in a few days she should be the Baroness Deveril.

With his usual habit of waiting for some lucky chance to turn up, which would relieve him of the trouble of having to think, and extricate him from a difficulty, Sir Thomas had not written to Madame de Rochequillon. He did not want to go down to Derfordshire, for he was afraid to meet the old man whom he had twice almost confronted at the little railway station. Lucille's note seemed doubly welcome.

"Egad! Fate seems resolved to make me one of her prime favourites. I am glad the

old lady has learned this without any intervention of mine. I shall seem so disinterested—and all that, ahem! I am either very lucky or very clever, perhaps both.”

He lost no time in calling in Norfolk Street. As he really did desire to avoid encountering Mr. Wynstyn, Fate was apparently determined to take care of his interests, for he just narrowly missed encountering that old gentleman. As he turned one corner of the street, Mr. Wynstyn disappeared round the corner at the opposite end, having three minutes previously left the house where the marquise was staying, where he had called to pay a flying visit before he quitted London to return to Derfordshire.

Madame de Rochequillon received Sir Thomas Jervoise most graciously, and they had a long talk together before Lucille appeared from the adjoining room. Sir Thomas of course expressed the utmost astonishment, tempered with a mild satisfaction, at every phase of the story related by the old lady; and he was ecstatic in his meeting with Lucille. The man would not have made a bad actor of light comedy. He made his offer

in more formal and distinct terms than he had done in his last interview with Lucille, and as the marquise was there to give her consent, Lucille was obliged to give a distinct answer.

He was not acting hypocritically when he urged an immediate marriage. Neither Lucille nor her grandmother, however, would agree to this, and he was forced to be content with an indefinite engagement.

In a few weeks the legal formalities were complied with, and Lucille was declared Baroness Deveril.

The pride and triumph which the marquise felt when this was an acknowledged fact were not unuttered. The only drawback was that she had no one to whom to fully confide her ecstatic feelings, for Lucille could not sympathise with them. Lucille received her honours with fear and trembling. A small income, which would have raised her grandmother and herself from poverty, and secured for them an easy independence, while leaving them in safe obscurity, would have better pleased her. The poor marquise had been very unfortunate in the dispositions of her daughter and her granddaughter, for Marie

had cared as little for wealth and grandeur as Lucille did.

The house in Grosvenor Crescent had been purchased by the late Lord Deveril, and came, with a quantity of other valuable property, into Lucille's hands. It was here that she took up her abode when her affairs were settled by Messrs. Rashleigh and Ponsonby. Madame de Rochequillon swept through the hall, and up through the magnificent rooms, with as much majesty as if she were the veritable mistress of the house. Lucille followed her with a pale cheek and head bent down, her feelings something akin to those of the bride of the Lord of Burleigh.

Lucille sat down in the drawing-room while the marquise explored the house. The entire place was superbly furnished, and well ordered in every respect, and the old lady's heart dilated with joy and gratification as she gazed on the tangible signs that the grandeur for which she had been sighing all her life had been realized at last. Then, when the hour for dinner arrived, although she maintained her outward gravity, she was like a child, revelling in the sight of the glass and china

CRYING FOR VENGEANCE.

silver and dainty linen, and the perfect arrangement of everything: the noiseless movements of the domestics, the excellent manner in which the viands were not only served but prepared. To render her all due justice, these feelings were not those of mere empty feminine pride and vanity, for she would have welcomed the hardest fare and the poorest surroundings if they represented wealth and power and earthly dignity, as did all this splendour. For underneath this scarcely to be repressed ebullition of ecstatic joy, was that deep, dark feeling, that burning desire for vengeance.

The marquise in all respects became head of the house, for Lucille shrank with uneasy terror from the responsibilities, and shrugged her shoulders with weariness when her grandmother spoke of the future joys and pleasures and dignities awaiting her—balls and soirées, presentation at Court, and the manifold privileges of rank, wealth, and beauty. Before engaging personal attendants for herself or Lucille, she renovated the wardrobes which were so limited and so miserably shabby. She rained orders on Jay, Capper, Madame

Charles, Underwood, Hayward, Laugher and Corens, and other fashionable firms, and spent hours in the shops of Hancock, Rimmel, Holbrook and Walker, and their brethren.

The marquise was as eager as Lucille's lover to hurry on the marriage. She had many reasons for wishing the marriage concluded. Lucille once married, and away, happily settled, she would have time, leisure, and the necessary funds for working out her schemes. And she really liked Sir Thomas Jervoise: he had a lordly way with him, a winning, ingratiating manner when he chose, of pleasing even when unconscious of so doing. Lucille had given the marquise eight hundred a year for her life; more she would not accept.

Sir Thomas Jervoise was unexceptionable in his demeanour both to his betrothed and to the marquise. As Lucille's indefinable fears began to wear off she became very happy—a strange quiet happiness, which she had never enjoyed in her life before, fell upon her like a pleasant dream. She wished very much to get away from London, and go down to one of the three seats belonging to the barony. But

it was arranged that she should not leave town until the marriage had taken place.

Lucille lived in the utmost seclusion. From the day on which she quitted the house in Eaton Square she had seen nothing of her pupil, nor of any of the members of the Alvanley family. Of course, she knew no one in London. One morning, however, the Marchioness of Carluthen called upon her alone. The old lady came with no sinister motive, beyond a wish to gratify a certain curiosity. During the short time that Lucille had known anything of her she had liked the rough, free-spoken old woman.

The marchioness was not disagreeably inquisitive, but she managed to extract from the young girl all that she chose to learn. In reward for the gentle way in which her cross-examination was borne, she volunteered to take Lucille under her protection, and introduce her into society. Lady Carluthen was rather addicted to adopting these fancies, although it was almost impossible to induce her, sometimes, to accept the responsibility of extending the shelter of her patronage over some really deserving object. She piqued

herself on being infallible, and on never making a mistake on points of judgment.

Lucille thanked her, and neither accepted nor rejected her offers, deferring any definite reply until her marriage should have taken place. She did not tell the marchioness that she shrank with absolute terror from the obligations of her approaching life.

"Well, my dear child," said the old lady, when she was about to depart, "if you want a friend, rely upon me. I like you, and that is enough for me, and I hope your marriage will be a happy one."

The days wore on, dragging slowly for some, going with rapid flight over the heads of others. Lucille at last agreed to her grandmother's suggestion, that the marriage might take place at the end of July. Madame de Rochequillon ordered a trousseau fit for a princess, and busied herself in selecting silks, linens, laces, and embroideries; while Lucille quietly passed her time in reading, or with music, having now, for the first time in her life, the means of indulging her elegant tastes.

Neither Lucille nor Sir Thomas knowing any one in London, it was a matter of neces-

sity that the marriage should be a strictly private one. Had it been possible, Madame de Rochequillon would have rendered the marriage the talk of all fashionable circles for its magnificence; but as this, under the circumstances, was not feasible, she was obliged to resign herself to an adverse fate.

The twenty-ninth of July arrived. For weeks past the weather had been sultry and intensely hot. But a few days before the twenty-ninth it changed, and a cold east wind set in, the sky was perpetually shrouded with murky clouds, and the bitterness of winter seemed to have supplanted the tropical warmth of summer. The rain began the night before the wedding-day, about midnight. Such a perfect hurricane had not, perhaps, burst over the metropolis for years; the rain poured down in a sheet of water, and went dashing and beating against the houses and running down the streets with fury, almost as if instinct with life.

The morning of the twenty-ninth was chill and dark. The rain had ceased, but the wintry bleakness of the previous four or five days pervaded the atmosphere. The marriage

was to be performed at St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.

When Madame de Rochequillon saw what a queer, mysterious, ill-omened affair the wedding would be, she was sorry that she had not, somehow, managed differently; though how she could have done so was a question not to be solved. It seemed so strange for persons of such rank as Sir Thomas Jervoise and the Baroness Deveril to be married in this miserable way, as if they were ashamed of their union, or as if it were a secret act to be hidden from the world.

It was absolutely necessary that the servants should not know of this mortifying affair. The marquise was puzzled how to contrive, but she did her best. She had not yet engaged a waiting-woman either for Lucille or for herself, therefore she had no immediate espionage. She packed up all Lucille's dresses and linens, and her own, for it was arranged that, when married, the young couple should go direct to Holme Priory, the chief seat belonging to the baroness, pass a week there, the marquise going with them, and from thence depart for the Continent, leaving

Madame de Rochequillon in England. The boxes were, therefore, sent down at once to Holme Priory; thus it might be inferred by the servants that the wedding was to take place at Lyndon Holme, or in Paris, for it could not be helped their knowing of the preparations, as the milliners and dressmakers were constantly coming and going.

There were several marriages performed that morning at St. Paul's; but this mysterious little party arrived very early. It was not a pleasant wedding. Sir Thomas seemed cross, and the marquise was scarcely in a more genial humour. Lucille shivered occasionally, and drew the heavy cloak in which she had enveloped herself close round her slender figure. The light was so gray and dim that deep shadows lurked in the corners of the church, and the walls seemed damp with moisture. The dull silence was broken only by the voice of the officiating minister, and the shuffling footsteps of the pew-opener and the beadle.

Madame de Rochequillon alternately knelt and rose to her feet, according to the directions of her Prayer-book; but during the

greater part of the service her eyes were fixed on a spider's web, which had been spun near the pulpit, and which irritated her excessively, and distracted her attention. The service was about half concluded, when Madame de Rochequillon's attention was drawn from the spider's web to the sound of heavy rain—splashing, splashing against the windows, and falling, falling with a steady, plashing noise.

“Ugh!” muttered Madame de Rochequillon, almost audibly, pulling her shawl round her, and making a grimace. “On my wedding-day, and on my poor Marie's wedding-day, the sun shone with a golden glory. Ah me!”

At last the ceremony was over, the usual signatures had been entered in the book, and they issued from the church into the open air. They found some gentlemen waiting, evidently for a bridal party. Indeed, while Sir Thomas and his bride hesitated—for the rain was coming down in a torrent—a long string of carriages drove up, and from the first sprang a young girl, attired in a splendid dress of white satin and lace, a lace veil over her head, followed by an old lady in mauve moire-

antique, apparently her mother, both cowering under umbrellas held by servants.

The fly in which Lucille and her grandmother had come, drew up to the door, having moved a little way back in order to leave space for the carriages of the first-comers of this party. Sir Thomas held his umbrella for his bride to pass to the vehicle, returning for Madame de Rochequillon, then stepping into the fly himself. "South Eastern Railway," he cried to the driver, slamming the door.

Lucille and her grandmother were so plainly dressed, that it was not necessary to change their attire before commencing the journey. Lucille wrapped herself in her mantle, and the marquise covered herself with her shawl. Sir Thomas had donned a light waterproof overcoat while yet in the vestry.

The three felt so chilled and uncomfortable that scarcely a word was uttered on the way to the terminus. The rain dashed against the windows of the brougham, danced in the puddles which it had created in the roadway, and seemed to entertain a fiendish delight in the damp misery into which it had plunged everybody.

Even when safely sheltered in a first-class carriage, the sense of cheerlessness did not forsake the unfortunate travellers. Everything looked gloomy and wretched. The rain kept on steadily, pouring over houses, fields, meadows, roads, lanes—unremittingly, mercilessly. Never was more inexpressibly dreary journey undertaken. It came to an end at last, however, and they reached the station at Lyndon Holme about five o'clock in the afternoon.

“Allah or the devil be praised!” muttered Sir Thomas, as he assisted the ladies to alight from the compartment in which they had been seated. “Everything must inevitably come to an end, if we can only afford to wait long enough.”

Madame de Rochequillon had sent orders, in Lucille's name, that a carriage should be at the station for them. Under ordinary circumstances, the short walk from the station to the house, of about a mile, was particularly pleasant—through the park, under overarching boughs, up a straight, smoothly rolled avenue. When the sun was shining, flickering between the leaves of the ancient elms, and

the birds were twittering, and the rooks were cawing, and everything was bright and joyful, perhaps nowhere in England could there have been found a lovelier stroll than this same avenue. But to-day everything was wrapt in dismal clouds, and in lieu of the noisy birds was the sound of the rain dripping through the trees, and plashing sullenly on the ground beneath. The very earth was sodden with the wet, and the wheels of the carriage made ugly tracks in the gravel.

The housekeeper had taken the precaution to order dinner to be in readiness against the arrival of the expected travellers, for although she fancied that the hour—six o'clock—would be too early for the ladies, accustomed as they must be to fashionable town hours, yet she thought that they might be glad of a good meal when they came off their dreary journey; and she was a sensible woman.

The dining-room was a magnificent apartment, furnished with exquisite taste in the Tudor style. Nothing in the room had been altered since the days when the Virgin Queen had honoured one of the lords of this house with her presence during a royal progress.

The day was so dark, so thoroughly wretched, that the housekeeper had closed the shutters of the room, and lighted the gas—for the country house possessed that luxury, being near the railway station. When the travellers arrived, their rooms were ready, with bright fires kindled, and everything arranged with forethought. They were not long in dressing, and descended to the dining-room, which looked particularly cheerful. After a well-ordered dinner, and some excellent wine and fruit, with a sparkling fire reflected from the oak-panelled walls on all sides, they began to recover their spirits, and to laugh at the discomforts which they had been hardly able to endure with equanimity while suffering from their immediate pressure.

The next day was bright as sunshine could make it. Lucille, who had felt downcast the previous day—her wedding-day—revived under the influence of the gaiety of nature, and sallied forth with a light heart, in company with her husband and her grandmother, to look over her surrounding possessions. In the afternoon the steward came, and she was obliged to make a more formal survey; but

she really enjoyed this little sally, and picked two or three oak-leaves, which she said she meant to preserve as a memento.

The five or six days which were to be passed by the newly married pair at Lyndon Holme soon drifted by, and the eve of their departure for Paris arrived. The morning before they left, Sir Thomas happened to rummage among his papers—they were few in number, and consisted merely of letters and stray memoranda—destroying the greater part of the contents of his pocket-book.

He went into the library for the purpose of examining these documents carefully. The library was one of the finest rooms in the house, and contained a large selection of the best books, evidently chosen by an amateur of the highest class of literature. It was well lighted, not only by windows of ground glass, on which were traced delicate patterns, but by an exquisitely stained glass window, reaching from ceiling to floor, and occupying the greater part of the wall at the end opposite to the doorway. The room had been refurnished by the late Lord Deveril, with whom the little sanctum of learning had always been a

favourite. His lordship had not been endowed with the craving love for books which reigns in the heart of a savant or a bibliopholist, but he had regarded books as luxuries, and he had arranged this room after his taste, in order that he might enjoy luxury in a luxurious manner. A few statuettes and busts of marble and of bronze broke the otherwise monotonous aspect of the russia, morocco, and vellum bound books, above which they were placed.

With Sir Thomas Jervoise it would have made little difference had books never been devised by the restless brain of man. Beyond some half-dozen of yellow-covered volumes published in the Rue Vivienne and the Rue Pierre Sarrazin, he had never opened a book in his life. He had entered this library only once or twice during the week, but had never glanced even at the titles lettered on the backs of the volumes ranged on three sides of the room.

He threw himself into a huge easy-chair placed close to a study table, and opened his pocket-book.

“It’s all very well for a roving young

bachelor to carry about inedited documents in his pockets," he muttered, as he littered the table with papers of various forms and sizes which he shook from the morocco-bound receptacle of his correspondence and loose memoranda, "but it is the duty of a married man to destroy as many traces of his past career as possible."

Some of the letters he tore into fragments, casting them into the waste-paper basket lying under the table. Others, after a careful perusal, he restored to their former hiding-place. One thin packet of letters, discoloured by time, he held on the palm of his right hand, balancing it as if judging its weight, and looking at it with a strange expression.

"Ah ha, my old friend Vayning!" he said, half aloud. "Valuable autographs. To think of your being such a consummate old ass as to imagine that I would, could, or should destroy them. You see, you didn't know, when you sent me these specimens of your skill in calligraphy, that each scribbled note would form a link in the iron chain with which I have bound you. I am not an ill-natured fellow. No, I don't think I am ill-natured." He fixed

his eyes contemplatively on a bronze bust of Milton, as he considered this point. "No, decidedly not—rather the reverse, indeed. In fact, I am too lazy to be either ill-natured or mischievous, unless compelled in self-preservation or self-defence to be either or both. And, my dear Vayning, I do assure you, if I were certain of always having fifteen thousand a year of my own to spend—if I could be certain of that, I should, with the utmost pleasure, throw this little bundle of pale green paper into the fire. But then, who knows how or when I may need your friendly assistance? What fools people are to write letters! Surely the devil had a hand in the invention. At the same time, I really don't see very well how Ruth Vayning could have communicated his wishes in this particular instance otherwise than through the medium of the post-office. The unlucky old schemer was hemmed in on all sides—his own fault, it cannot be denied,—but, in this instance, the game was assuredly worth an illumination, and I hardly think I would, if I could, undo what I did seven or eight years ago. I hope I may never be obliged to remind him of my existence

unpleasantly. I wonder what he thought of my orders for the jewellery which I gave to Lucille—paid for in ready money, too? How the old villain loves money—for its own sake, which makes the matter worse. I don't care a snap of the fingers for money. I like what it procures, that is all. I have looked only once into these precious epistles since I received them. I think I shall just take a glance."

He took the first from its envelope, and unfolded it. It contained only a few lines scribbled on pale green foreign paper, in evident haste, or with a hand which trembled, for the characters were unequal. It was dated from London, without any particular address.

"My dear Dallas" (they all began thus), "My cousin Astor is at Baden Baden, for the benefit of his health. I hope he is better. He knows nobody there, so I enclose a note introducing you to him. I should be glad if you would call upon him, and do your best to make the time pass agreeably, for it is dull being alone in a strange place. He was

ordered to Germany by his medical adviser, otherwise, I should have fancied he would never have gone to a place where he would be totally alone. He has unlimited funds at his disposal, so don't try to delude him into paying a visit to the gaming-tables. He is not disposed that way, but they say there is a wonderful fascination in seeing people play.

“Yours, R. V.”

Sir Thomas refolded this, smiling grimly, and opened the second, which contained a few words:—

“I am glad you like my cousin. I thought you and he would get on well together, although your tastes are diverse. Of course he would be pleased to have any company (without offence to you), and you are so lively and chatty that he could not fail to like you; but I was afraid that his decidedly heavy style of conversation would have bored you. I should be obliged if you would keep him amused, as, having suffered some months from illness, he is liable to occasional fits of dejection. Perhaps if you induced him to look in at the Kursaal—or whatever the name of the place

is—it might amuse him; but don't let him play, if you can help it."

The third ran thus:—

"I am sorry my cousin has taken it into his head to try his luck, for if he loses much money my uncle—his father—will be furious. My uncle meant to take him into partnership on his return, but if he does anything of which the old man disapproves, he would never forgive him. The old gentleman is not hard or spiteful, but he has rigid ideas on the subject of steadiness and all that sort of thing, and has a special aversion to gambling in any shape or form. It would be a terrible thing for Astor if he lost his father's love and respect, which, I believe, he possesses. I think he would become desperate if such a misfortune happened him—as well as which, he would certainly be disinherited, although the old man has no other children. Keep him out of danger, my dear Tom. I don't think it at all likely he will run into danger, however, for he has always been very steady—but those gaming-tables are peculiarly fascinating, I have always heard."

All these letters seemed to treat of the writer's cousin, Astor Vayning. The fourth still harped on the same topic, but it was a longer letter, and mixed up the subject with various other matters of lesser importance. After enlarging on some subjects of small interest, he went on—

“I am sincerely glad my cousin keeps within such reasonable bounds. I know he is so steady that no harm could ensue from his risking a few sovereigns to amuse himself. I could—and would—and do, if you like—bet you *five hundred pounds* that he will return to England without having been bitten by the mania for gambling.” This paragraph was wrapped up in nearly a dozen indifferent sentences on diverse subjects.

The fifth letter was also long, and mixed up the subject with others. “I was serious,” the writer said, “in what I said about offering to bet about——” (here some words were scratched out) “to lay you five hundred pounds to anything you please, that my Cousin Astor will not be drawn into gambling. Such a fall is impossible. I am so confident of winning

my bet, that it is only a joke offering to make it. He is as steady as a rock, which is fortunate, as all his father's hopes are built upon him. You see, I am not a very particular favourite with my uncle, and he has been so unjust as to place me in a subordinate position in his establishment. But I may mention to you, that if he happens to be disappointed in his son, Astor, he would, perhaps—— However, that is nothing to the purpose, and I scarcely know why I scribble such rubbish."

Sir Thomas next opened a letter written by himself, of which he had preserved a copy.

"MY DEAR VAYNING,

"What, in the name of old Nick, do you mean by all your hints and innuendoes, and vague offers, and all the rest of it? I think I see your drift; indeed, I may say I am not such an infernal dolt that I am unable to divine the sense of such transparent paragraphs. But are you absurd enough to believe that I will do you such a service as to drive your cousin Astor to disgrace himself in order that you may make capital out of his

downfall, without benefiting myself by so much as a farthing?—for as to your bets, and your nonsense, of course you would disown that when the service had been rendered. Speak plainly,—either that, or draw back at once, and don't keep on hanging and drawing, and hinting, and promising, without the slightest intention of performing. I understand from your last, that if your cousin incurs the anger of his father, you, in all likelihood, step into his place, and perhaps become partner in the firm. In one of your letters you hint that if Astor did anything which caused disunion between himself and his father, he would make away with himself. Of course I cannot tell your reasons for supposing this—and, frankly, I don't take the least interest in this section of the subject. But mark me—do you fancy me the block-head to play goat, in order that you, sly old fox, may escape up out of your pit of obscurity? If you do, you are an ass. I will make you an open offer in plain language: if you promise distinctly to give me fifteen hundred pounds in case your cousin becomes sufficiently involved in such and such a way to

make his father quarrel with him—why, then I will do my best to give him a gentle shove down the inclined plane sloping Erebusward. Write plainly in your next, and if you want the thing done, don't keep on beating about the bush.

“Yours, T. D.”

Rutherford Vayning had evidently been startled by this abrupt onslaught, for, judging by the date of the next letter, he did not write for some weeks.

“My dear Dallas,” he said. “I suppose there is no use in beating about the bush with a fellow like yourself—you have guessed my intentions. I agree to give you the fifteen hundred pounds when you have rendered me the service which you offer to render.” This was all, but it apparently did not satisfy the correspondent, for the next letter was more explicit.

“You wish to place me in a most unpleasant situation, by demanding that I should state distinctly what I require. You say, what proof should you have, on presenting my letter, to claim your reward, that the service had been rendered? You have, it seems, no

confidence in me. I did not expect this kind of treatment. However, as I have no other means of inducing you to do what I want you to do, I suppose I must write explicitly the terms of our bargain. This will not signify, for in case you fail in bringing about a breach between Astor and his father, my poverty will protect me from your possible threats, for you would despise such dribblets as my petty income would allow of my offering as bribes to silence. In addition to which if my scheme fails, my situation would be worse than it is, and I should lose the means of giving you anything, as I should be freed from the fear of my uncle's indignation. Once out of his house—suppose you drove me thence—why should I care for his opinion? Well, in distinct terms, if Astor, through his own misconduct, loses his father's esteem irrecoverably—and if he loses it at all, he can never regain it, that I know,—in that case I will give you fifteen hundred pounds; that is, I must premise, in case my uncle should take me into favour, as otherwise I should not have a halfpenny to give you; but if he discards Astor, it is almost a certainty that he will elevate me to

his place. Let us rather put it thus: when my uncle takes me into partnership, I will give you fifteen hundred pounds. I suppose you will think that sufficiently explicit? If you say this is 'Talleyrandian,' I don't know what more to say. I have one great guard against any treachery on your part, that it would not be to your interest to injure me with my uncle, and if you do not restore this letter, I will not give you the money. You see, I am now very plain with you."

The bargain had been concluded, and the scheme carried out, for the last letter was dated five or six months later, and was written in the coldest terms. It did not commence with any form of address, and merely contained the words:—

"Come as soon as you like, and receive your money."

Sir Thomas Jervoise quietly placed the letters together again, refastening them with a narrow piece of red tape with which they had been tied.

"Stupid old donkey, to think I would de-

stroy such precious documents!" he said, as he replaced them in his pocket-book. "They are as valuable as so many blank cheques signed by Rothschild. But then, their value daily becomes lessened, for suppose the old man, Astor's father, should die, why then they would be useless. But where's the good of foreboding? Hope on, hope ever—why despond? it only unhinges the nerves."

He idly opened a little flap in the side of the pocket-book, and peered in. A sudden change passed over his handsome face, and he started back as if a viper had bitten him. "Bon Dieu!" he exclaimed aloud, looking round him with a scared glance; "how did this come here? Misericordia!"

He took out a note, and throwing it on the table, regarded it with a face perfectly white and ghastly. He unfolded it with trembling fingers, and glanced at it, but threw it from him, and hiding his face against his arms, laid his head down, and uttered a groan of anguish.

"Poor boy—poor boy—poor boy!" he muttered. "I try to avoid thinking of him, and he is perpetually before me. I begin to think

I must have loved him. I liked him better than anybody I ever knew—and to think that it was my hand—good God! I wish I had not, that anything had happened rather than—— Oh, that fatal night! Ugh!—to think that I have been carrying *that* about with me for years, and never to know. I dream about him sometimes, and fancy him by my side; and then I waken, and feel like Cain. Poor lad! I would give everything I have to bring him back. I am haunted by his beautiful face, as I saw it last, at the foot of those cursed stairs, on the threshold of his own home. How the devil must have laughed as I struck that blow.”

At the end of some twenty minutes he raised his head, for he heard the rustling of a silken skirt along the corridor leading from the garden, past the dining-room, to the library. The next minute Lucille opened the door, and looked in, graceful as Euphrosyne, in her simple Swiss muslin gown over her silk petticoat, and her white straw hat trimmed with pale green ribbon. With the pure, cool light of the summer's day shining down upon her figure from the library windows, as she

stood enframed in the doorway, it might have been pardonable fancying for an instant that one of Watteau's or Greuze's beautiful women had just alighted from their canvas.

"I have been seeking for you all over the house," cried Lucille, smilingly, although with a pretty affectation of displeasure, speaking in French. "I did not dream of your being here. Come, quit your studies; I want you to see a lovely orchid which the gardener has been showing to me. It has such curious long spikes of blossoms, and such exquisite foliage."

Sir Thomas rose with some confusion, and rapidly tore poor Gustave Charteris's note in shreds, flinging it into the waste-paper basket. "I am at your disposal, my love," he said, advancing to where she stood by the door.

"I believe you have been asleep," said Lucille, looking up in his face and laughing, as she laid her cheek caressingly against his shoulder. "And to come here and affect to be deep in study—ah, arch pretender that you are! Who did you flatter yourself you could deceive?—some very simple body, I presume, as you did not even take down a

book. You have certainly been asleep. But —you are pale," she said, looking at him more closely. "Are you suffering from a headache? Are you not well?" she asked, with tender interest. "How cruel I was to laugh! You are not well?"

"Yes—no—I have a headache," he answered, with a gesture expressive of annoyance. "It will go off if I take a turn in the garden with you. It is nothing—it does not signify. Let us go and look at this wonderful plant you have discovered."

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT MADAME LA MARQUISE DE ROCHEQUILLON
FOUND IN THE WASTE-PAPER BASKET IN THE
LIBRARY AT HOLME PRIORY.

THE next evening, Madame de Rochequillon was alone.

She could not help feeling the oppression of her solitude at first; for, being in a strange place, where she knew no one, surrounded by the strange faces of menials who were not bound to pay her more than outward respect, with no employment to occupy her, the silence and almost gloom of the vast house seemed to weigh upon her like a veritable burden.

However, she had now ample opportunity for nursing the long-cherished hopes and desires which she had hidden within her breast for five years. Unfortunately, she

knew that she was no more advanced on the track than she had been that terrible night when she registered her oath of vengeance in which she had wanted Lucille to join. Money, it seemed, was of no avail. She had no clue—not the faintest trace had been left by the man who had slain her boy.

The poor marquise fell into great bitterness and repining because she could see no way before her of carrying out her long deferred search. Every day, in fact, would remove still more remotely any chance of finding the object of her vengeance.

“What if he be dead!”—she involuntarily clenched her hands at the thought, which did not soften in the least her savage desire for revenge. “If I had but the slightest clue—a sign, the smallest, would guide me. What shall I do—what *can* I do? I have been dreaming, day and night, for five years, of the power which unlimited command of money would give me; and now that my dream has been realized—the blood of my poor boy cries from the ground, and I am like one in a nightmare, trying to move, yet bound by invisible chains, which I strive in vain to snap,

which gall me, and fetter me completely. Turn which way I will, the same blank wall of mystery faces me. I do not even know whom he associated with, I do not know whom to suspect—what motive, whom could he have offended or unconsciously injured—unconsciously, for he would not willingly have hurt the meanest of God's creatures. I thought that poverty alone shackled me—poverty, and the fact that Lucille was still an unmarried girl. And now—it is enough to drive me mad. The face of my poor boy, as I saw it that fatal night, is ever before me, with a mute reproachful expression upon its pale features. Alas, alas, alas! My boy, my Gustave!"

The very sense of her own utter helplessness ought, perhaps, to have led her to commit vengeance to the Lord. Often had she prayed that vengeance might be given into her hands—weak, human, fallible hands,—and hitherto her prayer had been denied. Wicked and ungrateful woman, the angels must have sorrowed to hear her, from her girlhood, waft to the gate of heaven rancorous demands which ought to have been addressed

to Satan. For years these fierce requests had been unanswered, and it was not until late in her life that the first—for wealth and station—had been granted. And how had she received it?—thanklessly, without thinking of gratitude, as her due, as a long accumulating debt—without even regretting that two lives had been sacrificed to win for her this coveted honour.

It was a fine, clear, somewhat sultry summer evening, and the marquise roamed about the house with an uncomfortable, restless feeling, into the garden, through the house again, upstairs, downstairs. Finally, being fatigued by this exercise, she turned into the library.

The books on the walls were classified, according to their subjects, and then ranged principally according to their sizes. History and biography occupied the lower shelves; travels and scientific works were placed above these; then works of a more miscellaneous character. An excellent collection of works of fiction and poetry, all of the first class, by the most celebrated authors, occupied one section, separated by a thin partition; and there was also a choice selection of works on

general subjects in French, Italian, and German. Madame de Rochequillon wandered from shelf to shelf, looking at the titles lettered on the backs of the books, and paused at the compartment in which were ranged the foreign books. She took down, one by one, some half-dozen, replacing them, after glancing through their pages cursorily. At length she took down one at random—Alphonse Karr's "*Contes et Nouvelles*,"—and going to the table, placed her book, for convenience, on a carved antique reading-desk, and sat down in one of the huge arm-chairs, which seemed to invite to laziness rather than to study.

The soporific atmosphere, the balmy air which came through the partially opened windows, the silence, occasionally broken by the chirping of the birds and the cawing of the rooks outside, had a natural effect upon Madame de Rochequillon, and she fell asleep; for in spite of her youthful feelings, and the elasticity of her disposition, the marquise was old in body, and easily tired by physical exertion.

When she wakened, she started up with that uncomfortable sensation which attacks

people when they have been indulging in a nap out of sleeping hours. The clock told her that her nap had lasted forty-five minutes.

Her book was still lying open, and the light was yet good, so the old lady had time to read some twenty or thirty pages. By degrees the twilight came creeping on, however, and she closed her book with the intention of going up to her own little sitting-room, and lying down on the sofa.

Having returned the book to its own place on the shelf, Madame de Rochequillon was about to leave the room, when she found that she had dropped her handkerchief. She went back to the chair where she had been sitting, for it must have fallen somewhere near the side of the table where the chair was stationed. It had apparently vanished, for she could not see it anywhere in the room. Yet she distinctly remembered having had it when she entered the room, so she persevered in her search. At last, as she was turning this way and that, the skirt of her long sweeping dress touched the waste-paper basket, and toppled it over, emptying not only her handkerchief, but some fragments of torn paper, at her feet.

Picking up her handkerchief, she stooped to gather up the bits of paper, to replace them in the basket. As they dropped from her hands, the characters on the exterior of the envelope caught her glance, and she snatched up the basket with a cry.

The envelope had been torn across in two pieces, which were easily matched. With a sudden sickening terror, Madame de Rochequillon sank into the chair in which she had been sitting, and placing the two halves of the envelope together, looked at the superscription. The writing was that of Gustave, her grandson. She remembered the envelope well, for he had asked her for one, and she had possessed this one alone, and he had objected, because one corner was spotted with ink. She turned over the envelope, and saw the blue speck. The direction inscribed on the outside was—

*À Monsieur,
Monsieur Dallas,
Rue Fournier, No. 46,
Faubourg Saint Germain.*

The postmark was scarcely legible, and was

rendered less so by being stamped across the writing, but at last the marquise contrived to decipher it :—" Paris, 20 Juin, '56."

The date of the eve of his death. The marquise was shaking as with an ague. She could not realize whether she was awake or in some dream. How had this envelope come here ?

She picked out the bits of paper and joined them, like a dissecting map. She knew the note-paper, too, for it had a narrow blue edge, and had been given by her to Gustave. The note was torn into many pieces, but after patiently matching the fragments, she managed to make it complete. The note was written in French, and dated from the Rue du Bac ; even the number of the house was there, and the date—the 20th June.

" MY DEAR DALLAS,

" I am sorry to say I shall not be able to meet you this evening ; but as you arranged, in case I failed you to-night, I should be with you to-morrow evening, I shall be to-morrow (Sunday) night at the Rue Fournier. Will you tell Jules Pelletan, should you see him,

that I was unable to keep my appointment with him? I will explain the why and the wherefore when I see you.

“Believe me to be always

“Thy faithful friend,

“GUSTAVE DE LAGNY.”

De Lagny had been his second name, it had been Madame de Rochequillon's maiden name. The poor boy, while fearing to take a name not his own, had disliked the idea of dragging his surname—the name of his only sister, too,—through the mire of such scenes as he had entered in company with Tom Dallas, his evil genius.

For some time Madame de Rochequillon gazed at this note bewildered, not knowing what to think. Who was this man with whom, if he kept this deferred appointment, he must have been on the night of his death? Who was the Jules Pelletan alluded to in the note? How had this note come here—flung from the grave at her feet? Who had preserved it for years, and then scattered it to the winds of heaven? Could it have been in the possession of her granddaughter's husband?

Her brain seemed to grow dazed with all these speculations. She rang the bell, and presently a servant appeared at the door.

"How long have these pieces of paper been lying in the waste-paper basket?" she asked, eagerly.

Keeping the rooms neat and orderly did not fall within the province of the footman, so he replied that he did not know, adding something about its being the duty of the housemaid to look after litter. The marquise requested him instantly to send the girl to her.

The housemaid had a vague idea that she was likely either to be reproved for leaving litter, or for letting some valuable document, torn up in mistake, remain in the basket, so she answered the questions of the marquise evasively when she came in answer to the summons of her fellow servant. At last the marquise contrived to extract the deduction that the bits of paper must have been torn up by the master, as they had not been there the previous morning, and she had not entered the room the preceding evening.

"Are you sure, quite sure?" demanded Madame de Rochequillon, with emphasis.

"Well, ma'am, you know, it must have been either the master or my lady, because we have no visitors, and none of the servants would dare to tear up paper here."

This was obvious, and satisfied Madame de Rochequillon. She was shivering and pale, and even the fat, stolid girl could perceive that she was very much "put out" by the discovery of these fragments of paper. She sat down and reflected for some minutes, the servant waiting her pleasure.

"Can I have any gum?" she said at length, looking up.

"Gum, ma'am?" An impatient gesture showed Madame de Rochequillon's anger at hearing her question repeated. "Oh dear, ma'am—gum! There isn't such a thing in the house—there isn't, indeed, ma'am." The marquise seemed so vexed, the girl ventured to inquire if paste would do.

"Yes—yes. Get some paste ready as quickly as you can, my good girl, and bring it to me here. And I want my desk, which you will find in my sitting-room."

While the girl was gone to execute her orders, the marquise tortured herself with

surmises and suppositions. Who was this Dallas? What did Sir Thomas know of him? How had the baronet become possessed of this note? and why had he cared to preserve it all this time? and why had he torn it up at last? She thought if she could only find out the Dallas to whom the note was addressed, the rest would be easy, for either he was the guilty one on whom her vengeance should alight, or he could give her a clue. AT LAST she was on the track, and had made her first discovery at the very time when she had least anticipated it.

In a few minutes the housemaid returned, carrying the desk, and a small marmalade pot half filled with hot paste. She had also had the forethought to desire the footman to bring lights, as it was evident madam was going to do some work, or writing, or something. The walls of the library were fireproof, and gas was not admitted within their precincts.

"Thank you. That will do," said the marquise.

"Does madam wish to have the windows closed?" asked the footman, when he had arranged the desk and the lights on the table.

“Thank you ; no.”

When the servants had retired, Madame de Rochequillon opened her desk, took out a sheet of note-paper, and carefully pasted down the precious morsels of her dear boy's letter. She also pasted together, on another sheet, the envelope. This done, she wrote a hasty letter, addressed to Lucille, requesting her to ask Sir Thomas Jervoise what he knew of M. Dallas, and to gain every possible information from him regarding this unknown person. She did not explain to Lucille her reasons for wishing to obtain this information. The Louis Quatorze clock struck ten as she was sealing this letter, which she directed to the Right Honourable Lady Deveril, l'Hôtel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli, Paris. She rang the bell for the second time.

“I am going to my own rooms,” she said to the footman, when he appeared at the door. “It is of the highest importance that this letter should go by the 'early post to-morrow morning. You will not forget it ?”

“No, madam.”

Madame de Rochequillon went to bed, but not to sleep, for she tossed from side to side

all night, in a fever. In the occasional snatches of sleep, she had dreadful dreams—dreams which she could never forget, although they were but dreams. One was horrible, and she awoke trembling, cowering: she thought that she had become blind—the sensation was indescribable, frightful. So real was the idea, that she started forward with a shivering fear, to catch the first beams of the summer sunshine, to assure herself that her sight was still left, and the first thanks she had ever rendered to God were breathed forth in gratitude that she could still see the blessed light of day.

During the two or three days which elapsed before she received any answer from Lucille, she could scarcely rest, and went from room to room, "for all the world like a ghost, or a party with something on her mind," one of the housemaids declared.

The suspense was so great that at last Madame de Rochequillon began to fear that she should go mad if it were prolonged many days more, and the only thing that hindered her from rushing over to Paris to see Sir Thomas Jervoise herself, was, that she did

not know when they might terminate their sojourn there, and if she did not remain at Holme Priory, she would not know whither they had gone, for they would address their letters here. At last, however, Lucille's expected answer arrived. The young baroness said that she and her husband had gone into the country for a day or two, and therefore she had not received her grandmother's letter immediately. That she had shown the letter to him, and asked him if he had known one Tom Dallas—that he seemed much annoyed, and was rough and curt in his answers at first, but that after a little he had laughed it off, and said he did not know anything about him.

Madame de Rochequillon crushed this letter in her hand when she had read it.

"He must have known either my boy, or this friend of his," she cried, aloud, checking herself instantly. "It is evident that this man was a person whose acquaintance was no honour, otherwise Gustave would have mentioned him. I will make Sir Thomas tell me. I will go at once to Paris, and tell him my reason for asking, and he cannot refuse to tell

me. In all probability, he did not care that his pure-minded wife should learn anything of people of such stamp as this man must have been. If—if this Dallas was the man who——” she paused, and clenched her hands, while her eyes seemed to fill with a red light. “I will show Sir Thomas this letter, and ask him how it came into his possession.”

She wrote to Lucille, to beg of her not to leave Paris until she had seen her, as she was going over for a few days. Then she packed up some things, and sent for the housekeeper, to inform her of her intention to leave for Paris the following day. The next morning she set out. To a traveller with whom money was no object, the journey was easily performed. When she reached Paris, she went straight to Meurice's. Her disappointment was bitter when she found that the baroness had departed suddenly with her husband early that morning. The people at the hotel could not tell whither they had gone.

Madame de Rochequillon hesitated for some minutes on the course she should pursue, then decided that for the present it would be best to engage rooms at the hotel, and write to the

housekeeper at Holme Priory, desiring her to forward her such letters as might come for her, and then follow or write to Lucille whithersoever she had flown.

While she was taking some refreshment in the apartments which she had taken, she made up her mind to go at once to the Rue Fournier. Perhaps this Dallas whom she wanted to track might even now be residing there. It was not likely, but it might be so. Having finished her luncheon, she lay down for an hour, to recruit her strength, then sent for a *voiture de remise*, and set off for the Rue Fournier.

It was a dull street—and nowhere, perhaps, does a dull street look more doubly dull than in the midst of glittering Paris. It was principally composed of high gloomy walls, and occasional dingy shops, occupied by dealers in old curiosities, fruiterers whose wares would have been repudiated by Autumnus, and cōblers of luxated boots and shoes. There were some women gossiping, and a good many children of various sizes, shapes and colours, in blue frocks, and of a generally wizened aspect, playing about in the

sunshine. Now and again a water-carrier or a porter, or an old woman coming from market, would pass up or down the street, and serve to waken it into momentary life, from which it would lapse into deeper dulness than it had suffered before their advent.

When the driver stopped at No. 46, Madame de Rochequillon got out from her vehicle, and went into the lodge of the *concierge*. A dry, withered, cotton-kerchiefed old woman with a chronic cold in the head came forward, and peered out of the darkness at the stranger.

Deeming it sacrilegious to exhibit to any common eye the address written by the hand of Gustave, Madame de Rochequillon had transcribed it on a blank envelope. Without wasting time in any preliminary questions, she showed the written direction to the woman, and asked if Monsieur Dallas lived there? **The old woman shook her head.**

"This gentleman was residing here five years ago, and I am very anxious to find him," said Madame de Rochequillon.

"I have been here twenty years, so if anybody could tell you anything of that gentle-

man—if he ever was a lodger in this house—if anybody could tell you, it would be myself,” said the old portress. “But I don’t remember him at all. I don’t doubt that he lived here then, but I don’t recollect him in the least.”

Madame de Rochequillon shivered, and then shrugged her shoulders with an air of intense vexation. “Well, of course you could not remember all the people who may have lodged here from time to time,” she said. “But I am very much disappointed.”

The old portress stared at her from under a line of shaggy eyebrow, as she stood meditating for a few minutes, and had only turned to avert her gaze when Madame de Rochequillon looked suddenly at her. “It cannot be helped,” said the marquise. “I see, I cannot gain any information in this place.”

“Perhaps,” said the portress, “if you told me what he was like, I might remember him.”

“I never saw him,” answered the marquise.

“Um—why, of course—I know nothing about him.”

Madame de Rochequillon slipped a gratuity into the woman’s hand, and returning to her cab, went back to Meurice’s. She had assured

herself that she had not anticipated gaining much by her visit to the house where Monsieur Dallas had formerly lived, for it was only natural to suppose that in the course of five years he would be likely to change his place of abode, but yet she was disappointed ; and she had to endure almost intolerable suspense, far worse to bear than disappointment. A whole week passed, and she received no letter, no news. She well-nigh cursed the impatience which had led her to come over to France in this precipitate manner.

Five or six days after her arrival, she happened, going downstairs one morning with the view of taking a turn in the gardens of the Luxembourg, to meet on the staircase Mrs. Alvanley and Ettie, with a lady and a young man, neither of whom she had ever seen.

Mrs. Alvanley, and indeed Ettie, could not help being extremely civil to the marquise. True, they scarcely knew her, having seen her only once or twice at church at Deignmouth, and Ettie had visited her at most two or three times with Lucille, but they were rather glad to see a face which had something of a home look among total strangers ; and having

spoken to her with cordial politeness, they introduced her to Lady Creswell and her son, the Viscount Creswell.

After this accidental meeting, many little civilities were exchanged; for Lady Creswell knew scarcely any one in Paris, and was only staying for a few days in order to give Ettie some idea of the place before going on to Germany; and Mrs. Alvanley, too, who had simply come to "enjoy a holiday," as she said herself, wanted to see some of the lions.

Lady Creswell hated "sight-seeing"—and under this objectionable term she included visiting all the grand old monuments and relics of the past of the greatest cities in the world. Once, one of the most brilliant wits and art-critics of Paris had suggested, unfortunately for himself, attending her through the Louvre, to look at the pictures. He was deceived for awhile by her affected air of interest into the idea that she comprehended and appreciated his remarks, and he was dilating in rapturous terms on one of the finest works of the old masters, when, on turning earnestly to impress on her some particular point, he discovered her examining

the lace covering of her parasol. So Lady Creswell was glad of an opportunity to gain a respite from showing Paris to her visitors; and she was really grateful to Madame de Rochequillon, who had nothing to do, and who seized on any chance of lessening the pain and monotony of this waiting, when she offered to take Miss Albanley to different places which it was considered indispensable she should see. The marquise reproached herself for thus frittering away her time, and for even to a certain extent sharing in pleasure while the great purpose for which she had come was unfulfilled. But she found the society of the young, fresh girl an infinite solace, and the unsophisticated wonder which Ettie displayed drew her from herself to some extent.

CHAPTER X.

STRUCK DOWN WITHIN SIGHT OF THE GOAL.

ABOUT seven or eight days after her arrival in Paris, a letter came to Meurice's for Madame de Rochequillon. It was from Lucille, and had been forwarded by the housekeeper at Holme Priory. Lucille and her husband were at Wiesbaden. She accounted for her silence by saying that Sir Thomas had proposed leaving Paris, and going to Germany or Italy, and that they had journeyed so irregularly that she had not been able to fix any place to which Madame de Rochequillon could direct letters, and that she had chiefly from this cause deferred writing from day to day. She had not received her grandmother's letter, written the day previous to her hurried departure from Holme Priory, until the very

moment when she answered it; and now she thought it safer to direct to the Priory, as she was entirely ignorant of her possible whereabouts in Paris.

“I was not surprised by the evident agitation in which you wrote, dear grandmamma,” she continued, “for I think I know the reason, and also the cause for your wishing that I should ask my husband if he had ever known a person named Dallas. Almost the instant after I had despatched my last letter to you, I recollected something which, when I mention it, will at once answer your inquiry, and account for the reluctance which my husband displayed when I addressed him on the subject. When I was with Mrs. Alvanley, as governess, I remember one day Sir Thomas called, and met Lady Creswell in the drawing-room. This lady had encountered him abroad, and she was exceedingly disagreeable in her manner, because he had taken a foolish whim that he would like to travel incognito, and so had styled himself Dallas, and allowed people to take it for granted that he was an American gentleman. This slipped my memory completely when I read your letter, and even

when I asked my husband ; but when I had written to you, and thought the matter over, it flashed across my mind. I remember it distinctly now. I suppose some malicious person has been suggesting to you something against Sir Thomas, and you were uneasy in consequence ? No wonder, you see, that he does not like to be reminded of it, since it lays him open to such impertinent censure ; and I was right in thinking that he was annoyed when I inquired. We are not quite certain as to the length of our stay here. You will let me know if you stay in Paris."

She ran on, gossiping about the places and people she had seen. The letter almost dropped from the nerveless fingers of the marquise. She knew not what to think—but, unfortunately, Lucille, so far from allaying the perplexities of her grandmother, had increased them, and had propounded a riddle. This Dallas, then, to whom her grandson had written, with whom he had made an appointment the night of his most unhappy death, was Sir Thomas Jervoise.

For more than an hour she sat, trying to disentangle this skein. It was only by

degrees that she arranged her thoughts in even a semblance of order. Sir Thomas Jervoise had at one time taken a whim, when travelling abroad, to call himself Dallas. A few days ago he had torn up a letter addressed to Monsieur Dallas. This letter was written by her grandson. He had been with Gustave that terrible night. He had known Gustave, had, in all probability, known his associates. He would know who Jules Pelletan was—and, perhaps, be able to tell her if that person were still living—at what time he had parted with Gustave on that night; perhaps—she shuddered at the thought—he had been with him when the deed was committed, and had been unable to save him. One thing was clear—that whatever knowledge she wished to gain, must be gleaned from Sir Thomas Jervoise; and therefore she resolved to go to him. Another idea occurred to her—it might be as well to learn as much as possible from other sources about the time when he had assumed the name of Dallas, as it was evident that she should find some difficulty in persuading him to be frank with her. Lady Creswell had known him during those days;

to Lady Creswell she determined to apply. It was palpable, however, that she must not permit the viscountess, with whom she was so slightly acquainted, to imagine that she had any sinister motives in her inquiries. She must let the subject come to the surface as if by pure accident—speak of it carelessly. To find an opportunity for speaking on such a topic as this, however, in the manner she arranged, was in itself a difficulty, especially as she should have so little time before her departure for Wiesbaden.

Fate played into her hands this time. The Marquis of Carluthen was passing through Paris; he had come from England the day before this, and if the truth must be told, he had followed the steps of Lady Creswell and her pretty niece. Lady Creswell was glad to see him, and met his wishes half-way by allowing him to become an honorary member of her little party. The viscountess began to think that the chateaux d'Espagne which she had been building for her niece were formed of more solid materials than she had dared to conceive could have been possible, and that she would have no difficulty in

securing a most brilliant settlement for Ettie, if the young girl did not stand in her own light.

Poor little Ettie—poor child, she had been wrecked, and was now adrift, so that unless saved in time, she would be either submerged or dashed upon rocks. Body and soul, she was in danger, literally and metaphorically. Had it not so happened that she was hurried from one place of amusement to another, and allowed no time for thought, she would have fallen into a lingering illness. Her belief in all good was gone. She no longer trusted in hope, honour, truth; and seeing nothing but injustice in the bitterness of the trial which she had suffered, she had flung faith to the winds. She was like a child which cries and sulks because it has been debarred some half-promised pleasure or toy. As she began to have a dim consciousness that Lord Carluthen was making love to her, she almost wished he would ask her to marry him, from a spiteful desire to let Sir Thomas see that she did not care for him. Jack she had forgotten completely. Surrounding circumstances necessarily influence the feelings of

everybody, but more especially of the young. Old sayings are musty and vulgar, yet, like many other musty, vulgar things, they are generally true; and it is an undoubted truth what the hackneyed old idiomatic remark assures us, "that circumstances alter cases." Left alone, with her own sad and bitter thoughts, in her tower at Astolat, the poor little maid would of a surety have pined, and sung her song of love and death, and then—but the figure will not hold good, for Ettie was no more an Elaine than Sir Thomas Jervoise was a Sir Launcelot.

Madame de Rochequillon, having read Lucille's letter, and having resolved that she would start for Wiesbaden the following morning, went to seek Lady Creswell, hoping that in the course of such conversation as might arise she could introduce the subject of Sir Thomas's assumption of the name of Dallas without compromising her. She almost obviously threw herself in the way of the viscountess; but that lady had been about to send a message to her, asking if she would be inclined to join a little party to St. Cloud that afternoon.

"Are you going?" inquired Madame de Rochequillon, as carelessly as she could.

"I, with my son and niece, and Lord Carluthen, and one or two other people, will form the party. I should be so much pleased if you would go; for, indeed, it is for the sake of propriety that I accompany the young people, who happen all to be unmarried, and I shall find it dull if I am alone. Mrs. Alvanley has a headache, and is obliged to keep her room."

Madame de Rochequillon thought she saw the opportunity for which she had been wishing, and cheerfully accepted the invitation. The day was lovely—balmy and soft, and the sky was almost perfectly cloudless: The marquise scarcely uttered a word during the drive, and even when the visitors were exploring the palace, she followed listlessly, entirely preoccupied. She saw nothing but the portly figure of the viscountess, she heard nothing but the echo of her own sad thoughts. She walked abstractedly in the rear of the party through the park, seeing, but without noting, the flowers, the trees, the water, the statues.

Ettie was the only one of the party who had never seen the place, and to her it seemed like fairyland. Lord Carluthen, by his own desire, supported by the good management of Lady Creswell, had secured Ettie; the viscount—a handsome young man of three and twenty—had offered his arm to Miss Thiele, a young heiress, a fat, good-natured girl on a tour with her father, who admired everything loudly and prodigiously, from the Salon de l'Aurore and the Escalier de l'Impératrice to the Jet Géant and the plantations of chestnuts and limes. The others paired as chance or liking dictated.

Fortunately for Ettie, they came on a day when the waters were to play. As Ettie stood viewing the scene, looking at the long shady vistas through the wood, broken here and there by the inequalities of the ground, she spoke a few words of pleasure to Lord Carluthen, and listened with interest to his more or less incorrect account of what Le Nôtre had done for the grounds.

The marquise and Lady Creswell, caring little for the place, walked for a short time with the juniors, but at last sat down near la Haute Cascade.

"I forgot to mention to you," said Madame de Rochequillon, after some desultory chit-chat, "that I leave Paris to-morrow. I had a letter this morning, which obliges me to depart hastily. I am going to Wiesbaden."

"Indeed! Why, that is odd! We are going there, when my dear niece has seen a little more of Paris."

"I am going to my granddaughter and her husband." Then, by the most slow, most laborious degrees, circling round and round her subject until she narrowed her flight, and after expending infinite pains, and gathering intelligence grain by grain, she gleaned all that Lady Creswell knew about the antecedents of Sir Thomas Jervoise. During a few months she had been cognizant of his doings. Until she met him at her brother's, she had never known him personally; but she had known of him when staying at Munich, six or seven years ago, for her son had chanced to fall into his company, and some kind friend had warned her against allowing the lad to associate with this Dallas, who just narrowly escaped earning the reputation of being a professional blackleg. This evidence against

Sir Thomas was given with obvious reluctance by Lady Creswell, and in the most cautious terms, for none knew better than she the weight and meaning and danger of words and sentences.

A spasm of terror seized the heart of Madame de Rochequillon when she had mastered all that Lady Creswell could tell her. The trees, the people swam before her eyes, and the music of the waters as they began to bubble forth made a horrible din in her ears. It needed all her self-command to enable her to conceal her emotion from Lady Creswell. Fortunately, the attention of the viscountess was drawn away to some elegantly dressed loungers, so the conversation flagged, and she did not notice the preoccupation of her companion. Madame de Rochequillon sat like one in a stupor, incapable of collecting her thoughts, scarcely able to maintain an outward composure. At length her pallor grew so visible that Lady Creswell must have been blind had she not observed it.

"I am afraid you are ill, Madame de Rochequillon," she exclaimed, looking at her. "The fatigue has been too much for you."

"No, no—it is nothing," answered the marquise, faintly. "It is nothing. Do not notice it, I beg. It will go off—it is simply a little—little—— I think perhaps I am fatigued."

"You would perhaps like to return to town?"

"No—thank you—let me rest a little while here. I shall be quite well presently."

Presently the others came to suggest that they should ascend the eminence crowned by the obelisk—the Lantern of Diogenes,—and Lord Carluthen was especially anxious that they should go thither, as the finest view was to be thence obtained of Paris and the surrounding country, and of the waters. Lady Creswell unwillingly complied; she abhorred climbing or any similar exercise, more particularly because it made her face red, but she wished to be as gracious as possible to Lord Carluthen. The marquise followed her languidly.

How the time wore away during the remainder of their stay, the marquise did not know. All her movements were mechanical; she even replied coherently to some remarks

addressed to her, without knowing what they were. The passing figures floated before her eyes like forms in a phantasm, the sounds were like noises heard in a dream.

The young people enjoyed the day each after their own fashion. Strangely, perhaps, Ettie enjoyed it more than any of her companions. But there was no happy content in her eyes, no quiet light of sweet pleasure beamed from her soul; her laughter was in a wrong key, and almost too loud. She was not brightly, but glaringly merry.

It was no philosopher, but a ninny who said, "Give me so many causes, and I will give you the effects." A cause may be repeated fifty times, and the effect will of a surety be different in every case. Circumstances rarely create character. Character unconsciously creates circumstance, which re-acts upon character, and hence it follows that each Frankenstein is differently affected by his own monster.

Ettie was not firm, but she was obstinate; she was not proud, but she was haughty; she was not loving, but she had a certain winning, impulsive way with her which passed with

ordinary observers for being the outward sign of an affectionate disposition, as mica passes for gold in the eyes of children. There are those who love only once, and then for ever—nothing changes the heart of such an one. There are others who likewise can love only once, but who, their love once “crossed,” learn to hate with a vindictiveness unspeakable, who would be glad to see the erst object of their adoration reduced to the dust and ashes of shame, that they might have the satisfaction of spurning them with malignant scorn. Poor little Ettie—poor child! There is good and bad mingled in characters like hers: threads of gold worked into a sombre ground. Had she married the man whom she had loved—*had* loved: alas, how terrible is that phrase! how our hearts throb a sorrowful accompaniment to those lines, “loved once,” which scarcely need the poet’s subtle art to render them pathetic!—had Ettie married the man whom she had loved, she would **have** loved him to the last minute of her life, loved him blindly, loved him in weal and in woe, in prosperity and adversity, against all the world; if need be would have followed him into

the battle-field of the world, like the fair ladies of whom so many of the poets have sung; she would have defended his castle, like those brave and noble ladies in the middle ages, whose names have been written in history; she would have risked her life to deliver him from danger; she would have offered to him perpetually the incense of adoration and flattery; she would have treasured his lightest word. She was one of those who say, "I love my love because my love loves me." Is this selfishness? It bears a strong family resemblance to that form of human weakness. The moment the love of such a heart fails in truth to them, or they have reason to suspect that he cares not for them, the affection ceases. They do not say, "I hate you because you hate me;" merely, "I no longer love you, for you not only would not love me, but you dared to prefer another."

As for the young English lord who walked by her side this summer afternoon, watching her every movement with delight, gazing down at her face with such fondness he had never experienced for any other woman in his life before, Ettie regarded him with feelings

akin to contempt—looking on him much as she might on a big Newfoundland,—and condescended to him. She listened to him, was amused by him, talked to him with more freedom than she had talked even to Jack, laughed at his jokes, opened her eyes at his stories, and thus unwittingly flattered him. She was ready to marry him whenever he asked her to become his wife. She would marry him in preference to anybody else ; but she knew that she did not love him. She knew that she could never love anybody again. She would have been pleased if she could have had him for a big brother ; and she knew she would have attended with equal willingness in the capacity of bride or chief bridesmaid on the occasion of his marriage.

Lord Carluthen did not deceive himself. He saw clearly that she liked him, and did not trouble himself about nice shades of distinction between loving and liking. Indeed, had any kind soul offered to point out that such shades existed, in all probability he would not have been able to comprehend such fine gradations of meaning. The young marquis “ did not bother his head about senti-

ment and such rubbish." Perhaps there was a slight infusion of the ploughboy in the patrician blood of this descendant of the house of Fitzaltern—a house which boasted of the numbers of brave men and fair women it could count in its annals, famous warriors and celebrated beauties. He was a man whom not one out of ten thousand women could have helped liking, honestly and truly, and perhaps not one in ten thousand could have been found who could have *loved* him. It was as well that it should be so, for he would have been incapable of reciprocating a grand passion, incapable of understanding it. Had one of those officious friends who are always desirous of imparting intelligence which we do not want to learn, told him of Ettie's wild, intense love for Sir Thomas Jervoise, he would have denominated it "a foolish fancy," and only regarded it with antagonism as it caused her to look coldly on himself. The gods are more kind to beings of this order than they are to the poor yearning hearts. The sun does not always shine, and the sunflower must be alone in the dark days, or when the rain comes. The lark must have a more com-

fortable time of it than the nightingale, for he does not run the chance of being pricked by the thorns which surround the rose.

Lady Creswell was enchanted to observe how admirably everything was going on, both as regarded her niece, and also her son. She sat absorbed in a series of little abstruse calculations and plans, building up fairylike visions by her basket of glass. Perhaps, were it not for the ceaseless labours of these feminine architects, the greater number of the old houses would crumble and fall into decay.

The viscountess was encouraged by remembering that success had almost invariably attended her schemes. Everything she had ever attempted had been crowned with triumph. When everything looked so fair now, why should she fear failure? It would have formed a painful mental study, to compare her thoughts with those of the unhappy woman who sat opposite to her—the meditations of the one, bright as rosy dawn; the reflections of the other, black as blackest night.

So much were the young people enjoying

the pleasant afternoon, that Lady Creswell found considerable difficulty in marshalling them for return to town. They grumbled both openly and covertly, but they obeyed her commands, and after some skirmishing and attempts at evasion, declared their willingness to depart.

Madame de Rochequillon roused herself when she saw them preparing to leave the park. Gathering her black lace shawl round her figure, and shivering, she followed the others to the carriages in waiting.

The marquise drew back, from courtesy, to let Lady Creswell choose her seat in the carriage. On attempting to enter the vehicle herself, she was obliged to lean heavily on the strong arm of Lord Carluthen, who came forward to offer his assistance. She placed her foot on the step, and then scrambled up, but just as she had apparently gained the seat, she slipped in some way, and fell back into the arms of the young marquis.

As she did not regain her footing, but lay, a heap of black drapery, in the arms of her cavalier, the others, who had seated themselves in their various carriages, jumped out,

and crowded round her. Lady Creswell got out, and looked closely at her, while Lord Carluthen held her spare form in his clasp.

"What is the matter? Are you hurt? What has happened?" everybody asked.

The marquise raised a face distorted by agony. "I don't know," she answered, trying to stand upright, but falling back, utterly helpless, biting her tongue sharply to hinder herself from screaming aloud—"I don't know: I have hurt my foot, I think." She was nearly biting her tongue through in the effort to restrain the cries of anguish that rose to her lips.

After a hurried consultation, the young marquis carried her to the long booth near the gate, where, on crowded days, coffee and other refreshments were sold. It was now, it so happened, nearly empty, and they laid her on one of the benches. As they were wondering what could be done, a stranger approached, and joined the little group—a tall, elderly, gentlemanly looking man, dressed in black.

"Pardon me," he said, raising his hat with the inimitable grace of a Frenchman, "I fear there has been some accident. I am a

physician, and if I can be of any service, command me."

"Yes, yes," eagerly cried Lady Creswell, "something—I know not what—has happened to this lady; she has hurt herself in some way."

The physician came closer, and the others, with the exception of Lady Creswell, who now held Madame de Rochequillon in her arms, drew back. The marquise was lying back, almost insensible, her teeth clenched over her nether lip, her eyes partially shut, her forehead contracted with pain. She was conscious, however, when the stranger touched her, and able to answer his few well-directed questions. "I think it is my foot—I have sprained it, or—I don't know what," she muttered.

A very hasty examination was sufficient to assure the physician that the marquise had broken her ankle bone. When he touched her foot she fainted.

"This is a serious matter," he said, looking at Lady Creswell, who was making every effort to restore the unhappy woman.

"Good heavens! what a misfortune!" cried

the viscountess, with a face of dismay. "What is to be done?"

"Do you come from Paris, might I be permitted to ask, or do you reside in the neighbourhood?" inquired the physician.

"We come from Paris, where we are staying for a short time, and where this lady is making a brief sojourn." The physician stroked his chin, and looked again at the viscountess.

"It will be impossible for this lady to bear the pain of being carried back to Paris," he said. "May I offer a suggestion?"

"Thanks—you are very kind—it will be most gratefully received. I know not how we can sufficiently acknowledge your promptness and exceedingly kind conduct."

"At Sèvres, I know a woman who has an extremely neat, pleasant room, which she would be glad to let at reasonable terms, and would, I dare say, find accommodation for the personal attendant of this lady. I am afraid there is danger of a serious illness."

Lady Creswell signed to her son and to Lord Carluthen to approach, and held a hasty council. It was agreed that nothing better

could be done than to accept the advice of the strange physician.

"It is very unfortunate," said Lady Creswell, addressing him, "but this lady is totally alone in Paris. She has not even a servant with her, I believe. We are mere casual acquaintances, and I do not see how it will be possible to avoid leaving her. I shall remain for some days—but— Is this woman trustworthy—this woman of whom you spoke?"

"Perfectly so."

Madame de Rochequillon revived at this moment, and raised herself. Lady Creswell and the physician told her what they thought of doing, to which she readily acquiesced.

The carriage was brought up, and she was lifted into it, Lady Creswell going into the vehicle with her. Lord Carluthen offered his assistance, but she preferred that he should take charge of the young people who were going back to Paris. M. Isadore, the physician, mounted outside. When Lady Creswell apologized for all the trouble which he was incurring, he assured her that he thought nothing of it, and that he was not going out of his way, as he lived in Sèvres.

The carriage drove across the Park, and they were soon in Sèvres, at the door of the house to which Madame de Rochequillon was to be conveyed. It was a small, exceedingly neat-looking building, and shone in the setting sun with a bright cleanliness which was infinitely refreshing.

Almost immediately on M. Isadore's knock, the door was opened by an elderly woman, as bright, as fresh, and as clean as the house—a fat, comfortable-looking woman, with a smiling face and a trim figure. She broke out into ejaculations of pity when she was informed of the accident which had happened, and was so motherly in her ways and manner that Lady Creswell felt quite reassured.

The room into which Madame de Rochequillon was carried had a fresh, pleasant aspect. It overlooked an orchard, the trees of which were laden with rich, tempting fruit.

The setting sun came in through the windows, softened by a dainty white blind and muslin curtain, and illuminated the neat apartment, making it cheerful. The furniture, all old, but well cared for, was of different

periods, and of any epoch—old, though not antique, and had seen some good service.

M. Isadore, with the assistance of Madame Jacques, conveyed the marquise to this room, whither Lady Creswell accompanied them.

Madame de Rochequillon thanked the viscountess with as much grace as she could command in her raging despair, and then lay back in a sort of stupor.

“I regret that I cannot stay with you——” began Lady Creswell, with some hesitation.

“Thank you—I am sure you are very kind,” answered Madame de Rochequillon, gazing at her with eyes which seemed to look past her to some far distant object.

“But it will be, you see, perfectly impossible that I could remain. It is very unfortunate. I sympathise deeply with you——”

“I know—I thank you. I do not expect, and I could not hear of your staying,” replied the marquise.

After a few excuses, Lady Creswell managed to get away. She waited downstairs until she again saw the friendly physician, with whom she exchanged a few words, being desirous of assuring him that he should not lose his time

in attending the lady who had in so strange a manner fallen into his charge as a patient. Having done as much as could be done under the circumstances, Lady Creswell stepped into her carriage, and returned to Paris.

Madame de Rochequillon was thus left alone, in the care of this poor old country-woman, and in the hands of a physician to whom she was a total stranger. To attempt to describe, or give any conception of her feelings as she lay helpless, chained, would be impossible. She cursed her fate, she raged and stormed and rebelled against Heaven—but all mentally, for outwardly she resembled a cataleptic, lying day after day, her pale face almost as white as the sheets of her sick-bed, her eyes burning like stars, her thin hands outstretched, occasionally clutched in a fevered way.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECRET OF GEOFFREY WYSTYN'S LIFE.

HAD it been possible for Mr. Winstyn to forego the chief object of his life, and quietly settle down at Pytchley Farm with his sister-in-law and his three nieces, he might have become, if not happy, at least content. But it was not possible. It would have, perhaps, been more easy for him to part with life itself than to relinquish this object which absorbed his attention day and night.

He had made his fortune; he had not an anxiety, with the exception of the one canker-worm, in which all his other cares seemed to be concentrated. Could he have shaken off this burden?—But the speculation is useless.

Cynics would have sneered and triumphed had the secret of the great grief of this old

man's life been laid bare before them. Angels surely rejoiced over it, even when they saw the poor, fond heart vainly expending the libation of a priceless love upon the altar of a blind and ungrateful god.

Geoffrey Wynstyn had married while yet a young man, shortly after his arrival in Barbadoes. His wife died after a happy union of perhaps six years, leaving one child, a boy. To this child Geoffrey transferred the deep affection which he had borne towards his wife. He watched over him, indulging in a sweet dream of the time when they should be friends, companions, fellow labourers—those utopian dreams from which so many parents are rudely awakened.

Idols are almost invariably thankless. The idol before whom Geoffrey Wynstyn bowed, received the worship of his solitary devotee with supreme indifference.

In fact, this intense love bored young Tom Wynstyn, even in his childhood. He had scarcely reached the age of ten, when he ran away. His father pursued him, and succeeded in capturing the foolish boy; but, when he was fifteen, he ran away again. He was

brought back, and forgiven a second time. When he was twenty, he ran away for the third time, without a coin in his pocket, electing rather to be his own master, and to be free to roam whither he listed, than to stay with his father, and wait for his rich inheritance. The third time, being a man, his father could not follow and insist on his return; indeed, he took such precautions that it was years before the poor deserted father could track him. Geoffrey Wynstyn had written to a friend, a lawyer living in London, giving him particulars of the case, and entreating him to prosecute a search, regardless of expense, for Tom Wynstyn.

As the area of this search was the world, it was not easily brought to a close. Mr. Branston was a clever man, but he was not able to accomplish miracles. At first he was utterly unsuccessful — for some years; at length he discovered that Tom Wynstyn, having changed his surname to that of Dallas, his mother's maiden name, was roaming over Germany and France. Now the truant was found—again lost—living nobody knew how, idling his time at German watering-places,

especially at the places where gambling was rampant.

For about fifteen years, then, Geoffrey Wynstyn had never seen his son, whom he still loved, whose faults he excused, whom he would welcome back as a forgiven prodigal, for whom he would kill an entire herd of fatted calves. The bad boys are invariably loved and petted, which is an unfortunate moral example; it is Absalom, and Hophni, and Phinehas who are wept over, and—having been allowed to take their own way with impunity until their principles are ruined, and they behave outrageously—are still blindly adored, and pardoned faults without number.

Mr. Wynstyn was determined never to relinquish the search for his son until he either met with him or was assured of his death. Many times he and his agent fancied that the lost one had been found; but, before he could move, the track was again confused.

The return of Geoffrey Wynstyn to England had been partially hastened by the death of Mr. Branston. The lawyer had been succeeded in his business by his only son. This young man Geoffrey Wynstyn had never

seen, and so fearful was the old man that amid the inevitably multifarious cases which had been bequeathed to Julius Branston this particular case might not be treated with due care, that he hurried over to England to see the young lawyer, and explain the matter thoroughly to him. Julius Branston was twice as acute as his father had been, and wonderfully quick. His manner of listening to the prosiest and longest description of a train of circumstances the most involved was in itself sufficient to inspire a client with confidence.

From the time Geoffrey Wynstyn had come to England, the search had been progressing most favourably.

The sole motive which led Mr. Wynstyn to visit London about once a fortnight was to consult with the young solicitor, and to hear how the search was progressing. To his sister-in-law the old man assigned no particular reason for these continued visits. "Business" was a large and general term to use when obliged to speak of them.

About a week after the occurrence of the accident which had so unexpectedly reduced

Madame de Rochequillon to such a helpless condition, Geoffrey Wynston went to London to see Mr. Branston. The poor father's heart was trembling with anticipation and hope, for the solicitor spoke very distinctly of having at last come on the track of Tom Wynstyn, and of having made sure that he was to be found in a particular place, from which he could easily track him, even should he unexpectedly shift his quarters, after his usual erratic fashion.

Julius Branston lived in a tall, dark house, in Bedford Street, Covent Garden. It would, perhaps, be difficult to find any place wherein a lover of mankind would be less at ease than in the office of a London lawyer—especially in the office of a lawyer like Julius Branston.

Two clerks and a half constituted the staff of Julius Branston—an old man, a middle-aged man, and a boy, who attended in the outer office, and whose duties it would have been puzzling to describe.

The clerk second in importance was an old man with a history and half a dozen grievances, which he imparted with extraordinary circumlocution and mistiness of out-

line to the first person whom he could secure as an auditor.

"Yes, sir, yes," he would say, with a despairing look, hanging his arms by his side, keeping his eyes fixed ruthlessly on this unhappy individual, as though he might run off, like a leprehaun, should his gaze be for an instant withdrawn; "I fell into evil ways in my youth—I did, indeed, sir—into the hands of the money-lenders. I was young then, sir, and foolish, and you know what young men are. I ran through as fine a property as you would wish to see, ran through it in no time—in no time, I assure you; and look at me now—ain't I a warning to other young men—who won't be warned? Young men never will be warned, because young men are fools—fools, sir, that's what they are—young scapegraces. And my wife, sir, she had five hundred a year in her own right, and it returned to her own family at her death. And now look at me—just look at me—would you believe——"

And so on, generally breaking off to hint at a vague desire to borrow sixpence.

The other clerk was chiefly remarkable for

his determined habit of silence, which equalled, if it did not surpass, the profound reticence of Count Athos's Grimaud. He had never been known to open his lips for the purpose of speaking, except on one memorable occasion, when his old coadjutor had attempted to interest him in the oft-repeated history of his life and grievances, and then he had uttered simply one word, which had the effect, however, of causing him to be entirely exempt from any further recital of either the famous history or the grievances.

The boy, who went under the sobriquet of Smique in the office and in the limited circle of his acquaintances, was preternaturally tall and thin, and possessed a remarkable mouth, a remarkable appetite, remarkable legs, and a curious collection of rusty old pistols, the last-named being concealed in his desk, and only gazed at during ecstatic moments when he was happy enough to be the sole inmate of the office.

The outer office was in nowise different from the office of any ordinary lawyer. It was a moderately large, square room, fitted with a railed desk and three office stools. The

windows, like all legal windows, were thickly encrusted with the dust accumulated during many years; on the door jambs was painted the name of "Mr. Branston, Solicitor." No spot on earth could be less inviting or more uninteresting in aspect, unless it might have been the miserable little pen on one side, in which people waited in the event of Mr. Branston being engaged when they called.

Mr. Branston's private room was, by comparison, a luxurious apartment. It was carpeted, and although an office table occupied the centre of the room, yet the sanctum aspired to something of the character of a private parlour.

The office boy, one hot September morning, was enjoying one of those rare moments of bliss which chequered his existence. He was surreptitiously indulging in an inspection of the rusty fire-arms, and going through various mystic signs with them—the gestures indicating that he was loading, aiming, and performing singular evolutions involving a great deal of clicking. This was diversified by silent imitations of the attitudes assumed by Rob Roy, the Red Rover, pirates of high and

low degree, and other theatrical worthies as represented for a penny plain and twopence coloured. These occupations did not interfere with a third, necessitating the consumption within a given time of a couple of penn'orth of hard pears, including the skins thereof.

He had just struck a most satisfactory imitation of the attitude of a bandit chief, which would have been perfect, especially as regarded the right hand, had he only possessed a double-barrelled revolver instead of a half-dislocated hair trigger, when a shadow obscured the glare of light which came like a wave up to the entrance to the office, and lapped the threshold without crossing it. "Smike" rushed to his desk, tumbled his pistols and pears into the receptacle originally intended for papers, and hastily scrambled on to his high stool.

The person whose portly form had thus terrified "Smike"—or Joe Binckes—was Mr. Wynstyn. That gentleman was too much preoccupied to notice the confusion of the lad.

"Is Mr. Branston within?" he asked.

"No, sir—no, sir—he ain't," answered Joe,

breathless, but with the most inimitable expression of stolidity, balancing his pen on his finger.

"Not here?" exclaimed Mr. Wynstyn. "Why, I had an appointment with him for eleven o'clock!"

Joe simply uttered an unintelligible monosyllable in response to this. Joe did not consider himself bound to offer special courtesy to any of his master's clients, and he felt decided exasperation against this individual client for interrupting him in his rehearsals.

"For eleven o'clock, and it is now—h'm," grumbled Mr. Wynstyn, pulling out his watch. He changed countenance, however, for he discovered that he was half an hour before his time.

"I shall wait," he said to Joe, who answered with another unintelligible monosyllable, secretly objecting strongly to the arrangement.

Mr. Wynstyn turned into the private room of Mr. Branston, where he had spent already so many hours of suspense and even of anguish. He was not obliged to wait very long, for in ten or twelve minutes Mr. Branston appeared,

The solicitor was, perhaps, five and thirty years of age, of middle height, with a peculiarly sharp expression, a face neither handsome nor the reverse, the outline of which plainly told that he was no Gentile, in spite of the red whiskers and pale complexion. Mr. Wynstyn scarcely paused to exchange a greeting.

"You have some good news for me?" he cried, advancing to meet Branston, with extended hand. "How do you do?"

"I hardly know if you could call it good news," answered the other, with some emphasis, sitting down, having briefly disposed of the ordinary civilities. "I have certainly come upon the track of our friend, and this time he cannot escape us."

"Yes, yes, yes. Proceed."

"Why, he is at present staying at Wiesbaden, which place he does not seem inclined to leave for some time; but you cannot depend on his keeping of the same mind for four and twenty hours together."

"Well—well?"

"He has, it appears, been recently married, and his bride is with him, of course."

"Married?" cried Mr. Wynstyn, drawing a deep breath. "To whom?"

"To the Baroness Deveril."

Mr. Wynstyn opened his eyes, but did not offer any verbal comment on this intelligence.

Julius Branston began to rummage over some papers, and having found the document which he wanted, passed it across the table to his client. It was a letter from one of his emissaries.

Mr. Wynstyn ran his eye hastily over it; but when he came to the second page, he turned pale, and began to read again. Having read the letter over, he read it a second and a third time, and then looked at the solicitor. He endeavoured to speak—in vain; his lips were dry, and he could not articulate for some minutes.

"I don't understand it," he said, at length.

Julius Branston shook his head, and leaned back in his chair.

"I am afraid there is something wrong," he said. "He has, as you see, adopted the name of Sir Thomas Jervoise. Now, I have looked into the Baronetage for this year, and—— It is perfectly plain, at all events,

that your son has no right to the name. I found the name in the Baronetage, and——” He compressed his lips, and looked at his client.

Mr. Wynstyn pushed back his chair, and, drawing out his handkerchief, wiped the beads of moisture which had risen to his forehead.

“I don’t understand it,” he repeated.

“Nor I,” said Julius Branston, emphatically, but with an expression flatly contradicting his words. “It looks very mysterious.”

This remark was succeeded by a silence that lasted for many minutes.

“Sir Thomas Jervoise!” cried Mr. Wynstyn, looking at Branston. “Why—he was at his place near us. Let me think—there is a real baronet of that name. My thoughts are in a tangle. Was it the real baronet, or—or was it—I mean the person who was staying at Stock—— What was the name of the place?—Stockleigh Court? I never saw him—I cannot understand it at all.”

“If the real Sir Thomas Jervoise was staying at his own place in your immediate neighbourhood, and you heard no remarks doubting his identity in any way, why, your son must

have merely adopted the name as a convenient one in travelling. It was an odd whim in that case, and might lead to awkward consequences. It is a strange coincidence that you should live in the neighbourhood of this Sir Thomas Jervoise's place of residence."

"In the neighbourhood! I believe we live on the estate—but I am not sure."

"Is he staying there now?"

"I don't know—I believe so—I cannot tell."

"That is a pity. This begins to look a queer business altogether. I hope it will prove all right in the end. However," added the lawyer, shrugging his shoulders, "it is really no affair of mine. I am not an amateur detective, and I have my own work to do without undertaking to look after the duties of other people, *sans* fee or reward."

"Well, you will let me keep this letter, and——"

"I have taken a copy of it, which I shall be happy to place in your hands; but I should prefer to retain the original letter myself."

Mr. Wynstyn looked at him, and seemed inclined for a moment to crush up the letter;

and put it in his pocket. After a moment's reflection, however, he threw it across the table, and placed the copy in his pocket-book.

"I shall start for Wiesbaden this very day," resumed Mr. Wynstyn; "you will, in the mean time, keep a vigilant eye upon the movements of—of my—my son, lest he should again escape me. I shall take care to let you know my whereabouts at every step, that you may be able to find me at a moment's notice."

"Might I, without appearing to display any inquisitiveness, ask what you promise yourself in this proposed meeting with your son?" demanded Mr. Branston, hesitatingly.

"What do I promise myself? I promise myself nothing—nothing. I want to see him again. I could not explain my reasons, for they are unexplainable." The old man could not drag into the cold light of day the sweet, inextinguishable love which still burnt in his heart.

"Of course," thought Mr. Julius Branston, as he finally shook hands with his client, at the door of the outer office, "everybody knows their own business best, or they fancy they do. But, for my part, I regard a wild-

goose chase as a mere waste of time, especially when you have not even the satisfaction of plucking and roasting and eating your goose when you have the good fortune to catch it."

Mr. Wynstyn, on reaching his lodgings in the Strand, hastily scribbled a note to his sister-in-law, informing her that he was obliged to go to the Continent on business, and that he could not say for certain when he should return to England. "I may come back within the month, but am not sure," he said. "I shall write again when I have reached my destination."

He had not unpacked the few necessities he had brought to town with him, so he had merely to fling his portmanteau into a cab, and drive to the station.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE LITTLE VILLA AT WIESBADEN.

SIR THOMAS and his bride had established themselves in one of those pretty villas which are scattered in the suburbs of Wiesbaden. It was merely an idle caprice which had induced the former to persuade Lucille to quit Paris—a caprice which would have guided him without injury to anybody while he was yet a roving bachelor, and which he chose to obey now that he was no longer free to act as he liked without consulting another. Scarcely had they arrived in Paris, when he invented a sure method of having his way, for if his wife objected to anything he proposed, he turned sulky.

Already a faint cloud, hardly bigger than a man's hand, flecked the horizon which had seemed so fair to Lucille a little while before.

Lucille made two painful discoveries. Her husband was a confirmed gambler, and her society was not sufficiently attractive to keep him away from the fatal tables. It was long ere she would admit the truth to herself: she tried to stifle her forebodings, and to battle with the evidence of her senses; nor did she yield until overwhelming testimony, repeatedly forced on her, compelled her to open her eyes and see what she would avert her head from. Had her true position been revealed to Lucille in one day, the discovery would, in all probability, have stunned her. As it was, she thought she was merely gathering "bitter experience," and that everything would be right by and by; that she ought to bear with it now, and see what time might do. Thus a dark cloud had arisen between this couple, which nothing save a whirlwind could possibly clear away.

One fine afternoon, some ladies with whom Lucille had become acquainted called to ask her to accompany them in a drive. Sir Thomas had remained in the Kursaal until sunrise, and came home about the hour when the more sedate members of the community

were preparing to venture into the steaming atmosphere of the Kochbrunnen. "A few words" had been exchanged between himself and his wife, which had not tended towards a better understanding. They had breakfasted together, but neither were sorry when Lucille's friends came and carried her off.

Sir Thomas was lying on a seat in the garden, under the shelter of some umbrageous foliage, smoking a cigar, and amusing himself by making Nip fetch and carry and play tricks, when a servant came to tell him that a gentleman from England wanted to see him.

"From England?" said Sir Thomas. "Did he give you his name?"

No, the visitor had not given his name, as he said Sir Thomas would not recognize it.

"Very well. Say I shall be with him directly," said Sir Thomas, carelessly. "I shall not hurry myself for all the gentlemen in England," he assured himself.

He raised himself on his elbow, still keeping his cigar between his lips, and reflected.

"Who the deuce can he be? and what the deuce can he want?" he thought. "I don't want to see anybody from England. It isn't

any of the people who do business for me, because I, of course, know the names of everybody in my employ. I wish I could get a look at him before I come face to face with him."

It was not possible, however, for there were no means of obtaining a view of the interior of the drawing-room unobserved. He must risk granting his visitor the interview, for the stranger knew that he was in the house, and if he had any sinister motive in desiring to speak with him, it was natural to suppose that he would not be baffled by a temporary delay. Besides, even if he had sinister motives, he might trust to his own wit to get out of a difficulty. It was not until he was about to turn the handle of the door that an unwelcome presentiment struck the master of the house.

"What if it should be my distinguished ancestor?" he muttered. "Phew! Oh, impossible: how could he find me? If he saw me, he would not recognize me. What an absurd supposition. Confound it! I will ask for his card. Why didn't I think of that?"

He hesitated. He reflected that as the servant had already informed him that the

voice, "have you really forgotten me, or do you affect not to know me?"

Sir Thomas immediately assumed an obviously perplexed air, though it was with difficulty that he could conceal his vexation. "Here is a pretty situation!" he thought. "I wonder would it be possible to brazen it out, and carry things by dint of impudence?—Really, sir," he said aloud, "you have the advantage of me in every way. I—really—I assure you——"

"Ah, Tom, Tom, I see plainly that you do recollect your poor old father, although you will not acknowledge it——"

"What do you mean?" interrupted Sir Thomas. "What are you talking about?"

"Can you look me in the face, and deny that you know I am your father?" calmly demanded Mr. Wynstyn. Sir Thomas did look at him steadily for an instant, then lowered his eyes, without speaking.

"Ah, you cannot—you dare not."

"Dare not—cannot. Pooh! nonsense. Sit down, please. Now, would you have any objection to oblige me so far as to mention what you want?"

"Ah, my boy, if you only knew how I have yearned and yearned all these years for even a glimpse of your face! I am an old fool, I confess——"

"The only point on which you and I agree," thought Sir Thomas; but, to give him his due, he was not hardened enough to speak aloud, and it was only the involuntary shrug with which he answered that interrupted Mr. Wynstyn. "What a bore the natives of Arcadia are when they come into the ordinary everyday world!"

"I have been following you for years, now on your track, now losing all trace. I have never ceased to search for you. For so long as we both lived, I hoped——"

"What?" demanded Sir Thomas, with a mocking smile. He did not try to maintain the fiction that he did not recognize his father, for he felt it would be inutile and merely lead to a loss of time. He was most anxious to get rid of his troublesome visitor before Lucille should return.

"What?" indeed!" answered Mr. Wynstyn, shrugging his shoulders, and smiling bitterly in return. "I don't know—honestly, I do

not know. I am one of the most impious of men—I have made an idol of clay, and God has punished me. It is just. I dare not complain.”

Sir Thomas kicked a little footstool to the opposite end of the room to signify that he was in a bad humour. “Now, look here,” he said, after biting the ends of his moustache for a moment; “if you could oblige me by being rational for the space of five minutes, I would suggest that we should limit the subject of conversation to at most two points. Why did you come here, and what do you want? If you will kindly answer these two inquiries, I should feel much obliged. The rambling style of dialogue may be very amusing, but what it gains in discursiveness it loses in clearness, as a general rule, and hence is by no means satisfactory.”

“I did not come here to answer questions, but to put them,” replied his father, severely, and dropping the pathetic tone he had previously adopted.

“All right. I have no objection. So long as we get along somehow, it is equal as far as I am concerned.”

“ My first question will be a difficult one to answer.”

“ Perhaps it may not be answered at all,” replied Sir Thomas, with an affectation of carelessness.

“ By what crime, or series of crimes, have you become possessed of the rank and wealth which I find you enjoying ? ”

“ Upon my soul, you are a most objectionable personage, and I protest against your choice of language ; and I will not be cross-examined and badgered in this way. It is a sort of Doctor-Birch-and-his-pupils affair. I will not be annoyed. What good do you promise yourself by coming here to bother me ? ”

“ I will have the truth, if not from yourself, from others.”

“ Pray, what advantage shall I derive from going down on my knees and confessing my sins and wickednesses to you ? ” demanded Sir Thomas.

“ That remains to be seen. I shall merely impress on you that I will see justice done, even if you—and through you, myself—be the greatest sufferer.”

In spite of himself, the hearer shivered, for he knew that the old man spoke the literal truth. He did not reply, however. He had looked for danger from any quarter save this, and the unexpected blow almost paralysed his energies. While Mr. Wynstyn was speaking, he was reflecting on every possible means of baffling him. Mr. Wynstyn waited for some response, but in vain.

"You cannot deny that you have outraged the law in some way," he resumed. "Of the length, breadth, height, and depth of your crime, I am unable to judge. I tremble to imagine what you may have done——"

"Listen to me for a moment," interrupted Sir Thomas. "I have committed no crime. Do not use such hard words. I admit that appearances are against me, especially when looked at by one determined to prejudge me—to——" He paused, ashamed to utter what he knew to be a scandalous untruth. "I have committed no crime. I have simply taken advantage of a concatenation of circumstances."

"Indeed!"

"Believe or not, as you please. Such is the case."

"I don't understand you."

"So much the worse for you."

"None of this trifling and mockery. I want to know what you have been doing since you quitted me, and how I find you thus strangely situated." Sir Thomas had turned over every conceivable project, and saw no loophole of escape.

"So," he cried, with sudden exasperation; "you have tracked and hunted me down as a hunter pursues a wild animal. You would hunt me even to the death, and then you coolly brag of the affection which you bear for me! Thank you," he continued, with savage irony. "If I fall I shall owe the tumble to the kind offices of the only person in the world who professes to care about me. One would think you were the bitterest enemy I had on earth." He broke off, and rising, began to pace to and fro in increasing irritation.

"God is my witness, that I would have freely, gladly offered myself as the sacrifice to save you from suffering and disgrace," said the old man, his voice quivering with deepest pathos.

"Pish! Fine words cost nothing. Come, what are we going to do?"

"We should come much more speedily to a good understanding if you would consent to treat me as a friend instead of as an enemy."

"Come more speedily to a good understanding? We are not likely to get to that, or I am greatly mistaken. As to treating you as a friend, you make that impossible."

"I must, then, only try to drive a bargain," said Mr. Wynstyn, gazing steadily at him.

"Go ahead," contemptuously responded the other. "Luckily, it takes two to play at that game."

"In the first place, I do not quit this house until I hear how you became possessed of the title and estates which I find you in the enjoyment of."

Sir Thomas stopped—he had been pacing up and down, like a caged hyena—and leaning against a table placed between two of the windows overlooking the garden, stared at his father, without speaking.

"In the second, I wish to remark that I am not a poor man—therefore I can promise——"

"My wife and I have an income of about

forty-five thousand pounds a year," interrupted Sir Thomas, looking at his nails with a supercilious air.

"And for a few thousands, you will sell your soul to Satan—outrage all law and order?"

"We are improving the occasion, it appears; it sounds like the lady missionaries."

"Come, will you answer my questions, or will you force me to gain information by means which may cause you to bitterly repent your refusal to deal fairly and openly with me?"

"I must first know what the questions are, or how can I answer them? The rack must have been like lotos-eating or opium-chewing compared to this sort of thing."

"What have you been doing since you quitted me for the third and last time?"

"Wandering about," replied Sir Thomas, sullenly.

"How have you been living?"

A mocking smile flashed across the face of Sir Thomas, but it passed away instantly, and he answered, still sullenly—

"Chiefly by gambling."

"Miserable boy! How long is it since you placed yourself in possession of this title?"

"About a year."

"Is the real baronet living or dead?"

"Dead."

Mr. Wynstyn looked fixedly at his son, and saw that he was telling the truth.

"How, where, and when did he die?"

"Of fever, at Tunis, about eighteen months ago."

"Were you acquainted with him?"

"I was."

"Were you with him when he died?"

Answer again affirmative.

"How did you get acquainted with him?"

"I met him when travelling in the East."

"In the East! How did you get there?"

"How would anybody get there?"

"I mean, how could you afford it?"

"I had plenty of money at the time, having had a run of good luck at Baden."

"Under what name did he know you—under that of Dallas, which you adopted on quitting your home?"

"Admirably guessed."

"How did it happen that you were with him when he died?"

"He took some sort of fancy to me."

"He thought, I suppose, that you were a gentleman travelling like himself, for pleasure?"

"I suppose so."

"Well?"

"He was travelling alone, attended by only one servant. We became very intimate."

"Go on."

"Well, during the few months we were together, he told me a great many details of his past history."

"What kind of man was he?"

"Not a bad sort of fellow. I liked him well enough."

"He was about your own age, I presume?"

"You are correct in your presumption."

"Well, you had become possessed of the greater part of his history when he fell ill?"

"You are again tolerably accurate in your assumption."

While Mr. Wynstyn was thus wringing a confession in fragments from his son, the latter never once changed his attitude, remaining leaning against the table, his arms folded, and his head slightly declined.

"You were with him when he fell ill?" said the old man.

"I was."

"What became of the servant?"

"He died, after an illness of three days."

"And the master?"

"Died, after an illness of eight or nine days."

"You were with him all the time?"

"I nursed him."

"Well, he died. And then——"

"Why, then we buried him."

"And the daring thought seized you that you would come back to Europe, and personate the dead man."

"Right again, old boy."

"Did you resemble him, personally?" asked Mr. Wynstyn, determined not to notice the impertinences of his son.

"A general, vague description might lead people to suppose that we did, but anybody who had seen us would not think us like."

"I never heard of a more audacious plot. How could you possibly promise yourself success in such a conspiracy?"

"It did succeed, however, and would still

be successful, had you been content to let me alone, instead of hunting me down," cried Tom Wynstyn, flinging up his head with a savage gesture. "My luck has carried me through, and would have carried me through to the end."

"Poor boy! you preferred to rob a dead man, rather than return to the father who has loved you so faithfully, so tenderly."

Tom Wynstyn shrugged his shoulders.

"I did not rob him of a farthing. He was the last of his race, and his title would have become extinct, while his property would have lapsed to the Crown. I certainly was not disposed to return to Barbadoes, to drudge in your counting-house, looking forward to the occasional gift of a sample of the coin of the country from you as a great treat. It is a bore even to call to mind your charming little villa at Holetown — surely never was place more appropriately named."

"I should never have asked you to drudge in my counting-house, and you know perfectly well that I should never have dreamt of stinting you in money. But this is trifling. Let us return to the subject."

“Question, question — hear, hear — loud laughter from the Opposition,” mockingly answered Tom.

“None of your little Paris gamin nonsense, if you please. How did you promise yourself that you could carry through a scheme so daring?”

Tom Wynstyn hesitated, and would not at first deign to reply. At last he said—

“He had never been in England—he was born on the Continent. He had travelled all over the world under some name adopted for the time being. The family was extinct. He had formed no friendships—no one knew anything about him, except the lawyers and his steward.”

A dead silence followed these words.

“I hope you are satisfied?” Tom Wynstyn at length said.

“I have resolved on one thing, which is, that you shall relinquish what you have gained so dishonestly,” answered his father.

“How will you compel me to do so?”

“Very easily. I have merely to prove that you are my son—which I can do with little trouble,—and if you are the son of Geoffrey

Wynstyn, it is a self-evident fact that you cannot be Sir Thomas Jervoise, Baronet."

"You give me no alternative?"

"None. Justice shall be done."

"I should like to know where the injustice lies in picking up what belongs to nobody."

"Your attempt at sophistry is a very poor one. My determination is fixed and unalterable."

Tom began beating with the heel of his boot against the foot of the table. There was no escape—none.

"So," he said at last, raising his head and looking at his father, "you are determined on ruining me?"

"On the contrary, I am determined on hindering you from ruining yourself."

"How long will you give me to consider the——"

"There is nothing to consider. There is only one course left open to you, and that you must take whether you like it or not."

Another profound silence, during which Tom reflected, and his father watched his face.

"A pretty future I have before me," said

Tom, with a bitter laugh. "You don't happen to have a couple of friends in the detective line waiting outside, do you? The sooner it is over, the better—it will save trouble—and I am rather an advocate for economising time."

For an instant unshed tears glittered in the eyes of the old man, but he spoke in a tolerably steady voice. "You know well that I am not made of iron or of stone, and that I do not desire to pain you. You must relinquish your ill-gotten honours, but when you have given them up, I shall be satisfied."

"What remarkable moderation!"

"All I have is yours—you are aware that my fortune is large. You are my only child, and everything that I have shall be yours at my death, if you choose."

"Intoxicating prospect!"

"My money, such as it is, has been honestly earned; and I cannot understand why you should prefer the life of a lawless adventurer to that of an honourable citizen, with the inheritance of an untarnished name and a fortune acquired by probity and industry."

Tom started up with almost a savage growl

of anger, and began pacing to and fro with long strides. At last he stopped, and flung himself into a chair.

"So," he said, looking at his father, and drawing a deep breath, "the whole thing amounts to this—I have played, and lost, and it is you whom I have to thank. Of one thing be assured—that I am not going to play the humble and obedient,—don't flatter yourself. I suppose you have no objection to let me know what you mean to do now?"

"I am not going to take any steps. It is you who have to act."

"And pray what am I going to do?"

"You must renounce what you have no right to keep. You will escape punishment by letting it appear that Sir Thomas Jervoise has died, and you will resume your own name."

"And then——?"

"If you like, I will settle the greater part of my property on you, reserving as much as will suffice me for my simple wants."

"And if I don't agree to everything as proposed by you, the result will be that you will consider yourself bound to give me up as

a sacrifice to law and justice? However, there is one very important point which you have forgotten in your calculations and arrangements."

"To what do you allude?"

"I am married. Now, it is not altogether impossible that I may have an heir. You see, in that case, with your highflown notions, it would make little difference whether your son or your grandson enjoy this title and property. And grant that I have no heir, my widow would take such property as I might leave, there being no existing claimant on any portion thereof. You appear to ignore this fact of my marriage completely."

Mr. Wynstyn had not ignored it—he had simply forgotten.

"So you see, dear boy, this rather complicates matters. You have not merely to demolish me, you have to trip up the whole family. If an elderly gentleman with Spartan notions will insist on playing amateur policeman, and rushing into a crowd to drag out an offender, and hand him over to justice, said elderly individual cannot help trampling on the toes of some innocent bystanders."

"I could almost curse the hour in which you were born, ungrateful, jeering viper," cried Mr. Wynstyn, with a sudden feeling of anger.

"Oh, I have no objection, if the proceeding would afford you any gratification. Only I think that, for such a useless piece of amusement, it would be a pity to lose your character for consistency, especially as you rather go in for piety and that sort of thing. I do object to be called bad names, however. And as for your fling about ingratitude—your epithet is simply imbecile. Come, let us see what aspect the affair wears at present."

"If I could have divined that you would have proved such a scoundrel, I would have strangled you with my own hands when you came into the world," cried Mr. Wynstyn, bitterly.

His son broke into a fit of derisive laughter.

"My resolution remains unchanged," continued Mr. Wynstyn. "I am determined that you shall give up this property to which you have not the shadow of a claim—what do I say?—which you have stolen. Nothing shall make me change this resolution. Do you hear me?"

“ I think anybody standing between this and the Deaf and Dumb Asylum yonder might conveniently hear you without moving a step. And if it did not unfortunately happen that anything which I say at this present meeting goes for nothing, I might suggest that there are family reasons why it is undesirable that the servants should be taken into your confidence. Come, why the deuce don't we get this unpleasant business settled at once, instead of keeping on gabbling like a couple of old women driving a bargain in a market-place? Understand me clearly. I will not accept one farthing from you. I would rather not live at all than relinquish my freedom and complete independence of everybody and everything. Now listen to me. I agree to your demand—agree to it perforce, because I cannot resist it. But do not flatter yourself that I will don the filial and obedient mask—because I will not. I have played—I have lost. *Voilà tout*—well and good. The only grace I ask at your hands is that you will allow me a month before I finally yield up my present ill-gotten possessions. Do you consent to this ? ”

"I do," answered Mr. Wynstyn, in a faint voice. He was already exhausted by the painful interview.

"When one wants to get on in the world, and to take things easy, it is a great misfortune to have a conscientious ancestor so fond of one that he persists in hunting all over the universe till he finds the wandering prodigal, and clasps him, figuratively speaking, to his strong old heart. You have gained your point—I hope you are satisfied?"

"Satisfied!" echoed the unhappy father, in a tone which indicated a thousand different feelings, looking at the mocking face before him.

"If you are not satisfied, I don't know who has any reason to feel so. You have, therefore, granted me a respite of one month. I neither ask for nor volunteer promises—they would be unnecessary on either side." Tom Wynstyn recommenced walking to and fro, a heavy frown on his handsome face. Geoffrey Wynstyn bowed his head on the table by which he was sitting, hiding his face on his folded arms, a deep sigh breaking from him at intervals.

There was no escape for Tom. He could not even hope to make use of the time for which he had stipulated, in securing for himself a large sum, for he felt that his father would track him out if he openly outraged the law again by another glaring act of swindling, and would deliver him to justice. He must reveal all to Lucille—a task from which he shrank not only with the utmost repugnance, but with positive terror. He had a peculiar horror of scenes, and he still loved his wife, and dreaded to lose her esteem, although he had already openly gone far towards forfeiting it.

“To think,” he said, with savage bitterness, “that it should be your hand which should deal the blow!” His father did not answer, nor even raise his head. For some time nothing broke the silence but the echo of Tom’s footsteps as he paced to and fro, and the delicious, silvery tick-ticking of the time-piece. Mr. Wynstyn was the first to speak.

“I am determined,” he said, lifting his face, and looking at his son, “be the consequences what they may, I am resolved that you shall relinquish what you have grasped so dis-

honestly. Justice shall be done—if the innocent suffer for the guilty, it cannot be helped. I will see that you restore your ill-gotten possessions—that you give up this title and all that belongs to it, and should you not do so of your own free will, I shall force you to do so.”

“Bien,” answered Tom. “I thought we had said all that? I have no choice. I have been driven into a trap—I must do as you command. I fancied I was too lazy to be capable of hating anybody in downright earnest—savagely, vindictively,—but I find I was wrong. I suppose it ought to be gratifying to discover hitherto unsuspected depths in one’s nature.”

“And I,” cried Mr. Wynstyn, “never knew until this moment how much misery a man might suffer, and yet live. Oh, my son, my son,” he added in a tone of heartrending grief, “if any sacrifice of mine—my life—offered up, could blot out your sins—your crime—I would——”

“Nothing irritates me so much as to hear people deal forth twaddle,” interrupted Tom. “It is so easy to talk of what one might, could, would, or should do under such and

such circumstances, when there is not the slightest probability of being called on to perform our ridiculous boast."

A muttered answer escaped Mr. Wynstyn—an answer full of grief and despair. "I feel stifled," he cried. "Let me get away." He caught up his hat, and went towards the door, with the uncertain step of a blind man. Tom Wynstyn rang the bell violently, but did not move. In a moment the unhappy father had left the room, and in a few minutes he was out of the house.

The *ci-divant* baronet flung himself into a chair when he found himself alone, and burying his face in his hands, meditated profoundly.

"What to do—that is the question. How to balk him—is it possible? As for her, I cannot—I dare not tell her."

END OF VOL. II.





















